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John Hubbard Short.

Solomon Eagle denouncing the City.

OLD SAINT PAUL'S:

A TALE OF

THE PLAGUE AND THE FIRE.

BY

WILLIAM HARRISON AINSWORTH.

AUTHOR OF "THE TOWER OF LONDON," ETC.

"A dreadful Plague in London was
In the year Sixty Five,
Which swept an hundred thousand souls
Away, — *yet I alive.*"

DEFOE. *History of the Great Plague of London.*

"Nor could thy fabric, Paul's, defend thee long,
Though thou wert sacred to thy Maker s praise,
Though made immortal by a poet's song,
And poets' songs the Theban walls could raise.

"The daring flames pept in, and saw from far
The awful beauties of thy sacred quire;
But since it was profaned by Civil War,
Heaven thought it fit to have it purged by fire."

DRYDEN. *Annus Mirabilis.*

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY JOHN FRANKLIN.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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LONDON:
HUGH CUNNINGHAM, SAINT MARTIN'S PLACE,
TRAFALGAR SQUARE.

1841.

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OLD SAINT PAUL'S.

Book the Second.

MAY 1665.

(CONTINUED.)

CHAPTER IX.

HOW LEONARD HOLT WAS CURED OF THE PLAGUE.

Nizza Macascree found Judith leaning over her intended victim, and examining the plague-spot on his breast. The nurse was so occupied by her task that she did not hear the door open, and it was not until the piper's daughter was close beside her that she was aware of her presence. Hastily drawing the blankets over the apprentice, she then turned, and regarded Nizza with a half-fearful, half-menacing look.

"What brings you here again?" she inquired, sharply.

"Ask your own heart, and it will tell you," rejoined Nizza, boldly. "I am come to preserve the life of this poor youth."

"If you think you can nurse him better than I can, you can take my place and welcome,"

returned Judith, affecting not to understand her. "I have plenty of other business to attend to, and should be glad to be released from the trouble."

"Can she have already effected her fell purpose!" thought Nizza, gazing at the apprentice, whose perturbed features proclaimed that his slumber procured him no rest from suffering. "No—no—she has not had time. I accept your offer," she added, aloud.

"But what will your father say to this arrangement?" asked Judith.

"When he knows my motive he will not blame me," answered Nizza. "Here I take my place," she continued, seating herself, "and will not quit it till he is out of danger."

"Your love for this youth borders upon insanity," cried Judith, angrily. "You shall not destroy yourself thus."

"Neither shall you destroy him," retorted Nizza. "It is to prevent the commission of the crime you meditate — and for which you have been *paid*, that I am determined to remain with him."

As she said this, a singular and frightful change took place in the nurse's appearance.

A slight expression of alarm was at first visible, but it was instantly succeeded by a look so savage and vindictive that Nizza almost repented having provoked the ire of so unscrupulous a person. But summoning up all her resolution, she returned Judith's glance with one as stern and steady, if not so malignant, as her own. A deep silence prevailed for a few minutes, during which each fancied she could read the other's thoughts. In Nizza's opinion, the nurse was revolving some desperate expedient, and she kept on her guard, lest an attack should be made upon her life. And some such design did, in reality, cross Judith, but abandoning it as soon as formed, she resolved to have recourse to more secret, but not less certain measures.

"Well," she said, breaking silence, "since you are determined to have your own way, and to catch the plague, and most likely perish from it, I shall not try to hinder you. Do what you please, and see what will come of it."

And she made as if about to depart, but finding Nizza did not attempt to stop her, she halted.

"I cannot leave you thus," she continued; "if you *will* remain, take this ointment," producing a small jar, "and rub the plague-spot with it. It is a sovereign remedy, and will certainly effect a cure."

"I will not touch it," returned Nizza.

"His death then be upon your head," rejoined Judith, quitting the vault, and closing the door after her.

Greatly relieved by her departure, Nizza began to consider what she should do, and whether it would be possible to remove the apprentice to some safer place. While occupied with these reflections, the object of her solicitude heaved a deep sigh, and opening his eyes, fixed them upon her. It was evident, however, that he did not know her, but, as far as could be gathered from his ravings, mistook her for Amabel. By degrees he grew calmer, and the throbbing anguish of the tumour in some measure subsiding, his faculties returned to him.

"Where am I?" he exclaimed, pressing his hand forcibly to his brow, "and what is the matter with me?"

"You are in a vault near Saint Faith's," replied Nizza, "and—I will not deceive you—

the disorder you are labouring under is the plague."

"The plague!" echoed Leonard, with a look of horror. "Ah! now I recollect. I was attacked immediately after Amabel's departure with her father. Heaven be praised! she is safe. That is some consolation amid all this misery. Could my master behold me now, he would pity me, and so perhaps would his daughter."

"Heed her not," rejoined Nizza, in a slightly reproachful tone, "she does not deserve consideration. To return to yourself. You are not safe here. Judith Malmayns has been hired to take away your life. Are you able to move hence?"

"I hope so," replied Leonard, raising himself on his arm.

"Wrap a blanket round you then, and follow me," said Nizza, taking up the lamp and hastening to the door. "Ah!" she exclaimed, with a cry of anguish—"it is locked."

"This building is destined to be my prison, and that treacherous woman my gaoler," groaned Leonard, sinking backwards.

"Do not despair," cried Nizza—"I will accomplish your deliverance."

So saying, she tried, by knocking against the door and by loud outcries, to give the alarm. But no answer was returned, and she soon became convinced that Judith had fastened the door of the charnel, which, it will be remembered, lay between the vault and the body of Saint Faith's. Hence no sound could reach the outer structure. Disturbed by what had just occurred, Leonard's senses again wandered, but exerting all her powers to tranquillize him, Nizza at last succeeded so well that he sunk into a slumber.

Almost regarding his situation as hopeless, she took up the lamp, and searching the vault, found the pan containing the half-made poultice. The fire still smouldered on the hearth, and replenishing it from a scanty supply in one corner, she heated the poultice and applied it to the tumour. This done, she continued her search. But though she found several phials, each bearing the name of some remedy for the pestilence, her distrust of Judith would not allow her to use any of them. Resuming her seat by the couch of the sufferer, and worn out with fatigue and anxiety, she presently dropped asleep. She was awakened

after awhile by a slight noise near her, and beheld Judith bending over the apprentice, with a pot of ointment in her hand which she was about to apply to the part affected. The poultice had already been removed. Uttering a loud cry, Nizza started to her feet, and snatching the ointment from the nurse threw it away. As soon as the latter recovered from her surprise, she seized her assailant, and forced her into the seat she had just quitted.

"Stir not till I give you permission," she cried, fiercely. "I wish to cure this young man, if you will let me."

"You intend to murder him," replied Nizza; "but while I live you shall never accomplish your atrocious purpose. Help! help!" And she uttered a prolonged and piercing scream.

"Peace! or I will strangle you," cried Judith, compressing Nizza's slender throat with a powerful gripe.

And she would, in all probability, have executed her terrible threat, if a secret door in the wall had not suddenly opened and admitted Solomon Eagle. A torch supplied the place of his brasier, and he held it aloft, and threw its ruddy light upon the scene. On seeing him, Ju-

dith relinquished her grasp, and glared at him with a mixture of defiance and apprehension; while Nizza, half dead with terror, instantly rushed towards him, and throwing herself at his feet, besought him to save her.

"No harm shall befall you," replied Solomon Eagle, extending his arms over her. "Tell me what has happened?"

Nizza hastily explained the motive of Judith's attack upon her life. The plague-nurse endeavoured to defend herself, and, in her turn, charged her accuser with a like attempt. But Solomon Eagle interrupted her.

"Be silent, false woman," he cried; "and think not to delude me with these idle fabrications. I fully believe that you would have taken the life of this poor youth; and, did not I regard you as one of the necessary agents of Heaven's vengeance, I would instantly deliver you up to justice. But the measure of your iniquities is not yet filled up. Your former crimes are not unknown to me. Neither is the last dark deed, which you imagined concealed from every human eye, hidden from me."

"I know not what you mean," returned Judith, trembling, in spite of herself.

"I will tell you, then," rejoined Solomon Eagle, catching her hand, and dragging her into the farthest corner of the vault. "Give ear to me," he continued, in a low voice, "and doubt, if you can, that I have witnessed what I relate. I saw you enter a small chamber behind the vestry, in which Thomas Quatremain, who once filled the place of minor canon in this cathedral, was laid. No one was there beside yourself and the dying man. Your first business was to search his vestments, and take away his keys."

"Ha!" exclaimed Judith, starting.

"While securing his keys," pursued Solomon Eagle, "the owner wakened, and uttered a low, but angry remonstrance. Better he had been silent. Dipping a napkin in an ewer of water that stood beside him, you held the wet cloth over his face, and did not remove it till life was extinct. All this I saw."

"But you will not reveal it?" said Judith, tremblingly.

"I will not," replied Solomon Eagle; "for the reasons I have just stated,—namely, that I look upon you as one of the scourges appointed by Heaven."

"And so I am," rejoined Judith with impious exultation; "it is my mission to destroy and pillage, and I will fulfil it."

"Take heed you do not exceed it," replied Solomon Eagle. "Lift a finger against either of these young persons, and I will reveal all. Yes," he continued, menacingly, "I will disclose such dreadful things against you, that you will assuredly be adjudged to a gibbet higher than the highest tower of this proud fane."

"I defy you, wretch!" retorted Judith. "You can prove nothing against me."

"Defy me?—ha!" cried Solomon Eagle, with a terrible laugh. "First," he added, dashing her backwards against the wall—"first, to prove my power. Next," he continued, drawing from her pockets a bunch of keys, "to show that I speak the truth. These were taken from the vest of the murdered man. No one, as yet, but ourselves, knows that he is dead."

"And who shall say which of the two is the murderer?" cried Judith. "Villain! I charge you with the deed."

"You are, indeed, well fitted for your ap-

pointed task," returned Solomon Eagle, gazing at her with astonishment, "for sometimes Heaven, for its own wise purpose, will allow the children of hell to execute its vengeance upon earth. But think not you will always thus escape. No, you may pursue your evil course for awhile—you, and your companion in crime,—but a day of retribution will arrive for both — a day when ye shall be devoured, living, by flames of fire—when all your sins shall arise before your eyes, and ye shall have no time for repentance, — and when ye shall pass from one fierce fire to another yet fiercer, and wholly unquenchable!"

As he concluded, he again dashed her against the wall with such violence, that she fell senseless upon the ground.

"And now," he said, turning to Nizza Macascree, who looked on in alarm and surprise, "what can I do for you?"

"Bear this youth to a place of safety," was her answer.

Solomon Eagle answered by lifting up the pallet upon which Leonard was laid with as much ease as if it had been an infant's cradle, and calling on Nizza to bring the torch, passed

with his burthen through the secret door. Directing her to close it after them, he took his way along a narrow stone passage, until he came to a chink in the wall commanding a small chamber, and desired her to look through it. She obeyed, and beheld, stretched upon a couch, the corpse of a man.

"It is Mr. Quatremain, the minor-canon," she said, retiring.

"It is," returned Solomon Eagle, "and it will be supposed that he died of the plague. But his end was accelerated by Judith Malmayns."

Without allowing her time for reply, he pursued his course, traversing another long narrow passage.

"Where are we?" asked Nizza, as they arrived at the foot of a spiral stone staircase.

"Beneath the central tower of the cathedral," replied Solomon Eagle. "I will take you to a cell known only to myself, where this youth will be in perfect safety."

Ascending the staircase, they passed through an arched door, and entered the great northern ambulatory. Nizza gazed down for a moment into the nave, but all was buried in darkness,

and no sound reached her to give her an idea that any one was below. Proceeding towards the west, Solomon Eagle arrived at a small recess in the wall opposite one of the broad-arched openings looking into the nave, and entering it, pressed against a spring at the further extremity, and a stone door flying open, discovered a secret cell, on the floor of which his brasier was burning. Depositing his burthen on the floor, he said to Nizza, "He is now safe. Go in search of proper assistance, and I will watch by him till you return."

Nizza did not require a second exhortation, but quitting the cell and noticing its situation, swiftly descended the winding staircase, and hurrying along the northern aisle, proceeded to a small chamber beneath the tower at its western extremity, which she knew was occupied by one of the vergers. Speedily arousing him, she told him her errand, and implored him to remain on the watch till she returned with Doctor Hodges. The verger promised compliance, and opening a wicket in the great doorway, allowed her to go forth. A few seconds brought her to the Doctor's dwelling, and though it was an hour after midnight, her

summons was promptly answered by the old porter, who conveyed her message to his master. Doctor Hodges had just retired to rest, but, on learning in whose behalf his services were required, he sprang out of bed, and hastily slipped on his clothes.

"I would not for half I am worth, that that poor youth should perish," he cried. "I take a great interest in him — a very great interest. He must not be neglected. How comes he at Saint Paul's, I wonder? But I can obtain information on that point as I go thither. No time must be lost."

Ruminating thus, he swallowed a glass of sack, and providing himself with a case of instruments, and such medicines as he thought he might require, he descended to Nizza. On the way to the cathedral, she acquainted him with what had befallen Leonard during the last four-and-twenty hours, and the only circumstance that she kept back was Judith's attempt on his life. This she intended to reveal at a more fitting opportunity. The Doctor expressed somewhat emphatically his disapproval of the conduct of Mr. Bloundel, but promised to set all to rights without loss of time.

"The only difficulty, I foresee," he observed, "is that the poor youth is attacked by the pestilence, and though I may succeed in curing him, his master will probably have shut up his house before I can accomplish my object, in which case all chance of his union with Amabel will be at an end."

"So much the better," rejoined Nizza, sharply; "she does not deserve him."

"There I agree with you," returned Hodges. —"But could you point out any one who does?" he added, with a slight but significant laugh.

No answer was returned, and as they had just reached the portico of the cathedral, they entered the sacred structure in silence.

As they ascended the winding stairs, loud outcries resounding along the ambulatory, and echoed by the vaulted roof of the nave, convinced them that the sufferer was again in a state of frenzy, produced by fever and the anguish of his sore; and on reaching the cell, they found him struggling violently with Solomon Eagle, who held him down by main force.

"He is in a fearfully-excited state, truly," observed Hodges, as he drew near, "and must

not be left for a moment, or he will do himself a mischief. I must give him a draught to allay the fever, and compose his nerves — for in this state I dare not have recourse to the lancet."

With this, he dressed the tumour, and pouring the contents of a large phial which he had brought with him in a cup, he held it to the burning lips of the apprentice, who eagerly quaffed it. It was soon apparent that the dose produced a salutary effect, and a second was administered. Still, the sufferer, though calmer, continued to ramble as before, — complained that his veins were filled with molten lead — entreated them to plunge him in a stream, so that he might cool his intolerable thirst, and appeared to be in great agony. Doctor Hodges watched by him till daybreak, at which time he sank into a slumber, and Solomon Eagle, who had never till then relinquished his hold of him, now ventured to resign his post. The Doctor was then about to depart, but at the urgent solicitation of Nizza, who had stationed herself at the door of the cell, he agreed to remain a little longer.

Two hours after this, the doors of the cathedral were opened, and a large crowd soon

assembled within the nave, as on the preceding day. The tumult of voices reached the cell and awakened the sleeper. Before he could be prevented, he started from his bed, and dashing aside the feeble opposition offered by Nizza and the doctor, ran along the ambulatory, uttering a loud and fearful cry. Finding the door of the winding staircase open, he darted through it, and in a few seconds reappeared in the aisle. Hearing the cries, several persons rushed to meet him, but on beholding his haggard looks and strange appearance, —he was merely wrapped in a blanket,—they instantly recoiled. Meantime, Doctor Hodges, who had run to one of the arched openings looking upon the nave, called out to them to secure the fugitive. But all fled at his approach, and when he reached the door of the southern transept, the verger, instead of attempting to stop him, retreated with a cry of alarm. As he passed through the outlet, one man bolder than the rest caught hold of him, and endeavoured to detain him. But leaving the blanket in his hands, and without other covering than his shirt, the apprentice dashed across the church-yard—next shaped his course

down Saint Bennet's Hill—then crossed Thames Street, — and finally speeding along another narrow thoroughfare, reached Paul's Wharf. Gazing for a moment at the current sweeping past him,—it was high-tide,— he plunged head foremost into it from the high embankment, and on rising to the surface, being a strong and expert swimmer, struck out for the opposite shore. Those who beheld him were struck with amazement, but such was the alarm occasioned by his appearance that none ventured to interfere with him. He had not crossed more than a fourth part of the stream when Doctor Hodges arrived at the wharf; but neither promises of reward nor threats could induce any of the watermen to follow him. The humane physician would have sprung into a boat, but feeling he should be wholly unable to manage it, he most reluctantly abandoned his purpose. Scarcely doubting what the result of this rash attempt would be, and yet unable to tear himself away, he lingered on the wharf till he saw Leonard reach the opposite bank, where an attempt was made by a party of persons to seize him. But instead of quietly surrendering himself, the apprentice instantly

leapt into the river again, and began to swim back towards the point whence he had started. Amazed at what he saw, the Doctor ordered his servant, who by this time had joined the group, to bring a blanket, and descending to the edge of the river, awaited the swimmer's arrival. In less than ten minutes he had reached the shore, and clambering on the bank, fell from exhaustion.

"This is a violent effort of nature, which has accomplished more than science or skill could do," said Hodges, as he gazed on the body, and saw that the pestilential tumour had wholly disappeared—"he is completely cured of the plague."

And throwing the blanket over him, he ordered him to be conveyed to his own house.

CHAPTER X.

THE PEST-HOUSE IN FINSBURY FIELDS.

Not a word passed between the grocer and his daughter, as he took her home from Saint Paul's. Amabel, in fact, was so overpowered by conflicting emotions that she could not speak; while her father, who could not help reproaching himself for the harshness he had displayed towards Leonard Holt, felt no disposition to break silence. They found Mrs. Bloundel at the shop-door, drowned in tears, and almost in a state of distraction. On seeing them, she rushed towards her daughter, and straining her to her bosom, gave free vent to the impulses of her affection. Allowing the first transports of joy to subside, Mr. Bloundel begged her to retire to her own room with Amabel, and not to leave it, till they had both regained their com-

posure, when he wished to have some serious conversation with them.

His request complied with, the grocer then retraced his steps to the cathedral, with the intention of seeking an explanation from Leonard, and, if he saw occasion to do so, of revoking his severe mandate. But long before he reached the southern transept, the apprentice had disappeared, nor could he learn what had become of him. While anxiously pursuing his search amid the crowd, and addressing inquiries to all whom he thought likely to afford him information, he perceived a man pushing his way towards him. As this person drew near, he recognized Pillichody, and would have got out of his way had it been possible.

"You are looking for your apprentice, I understand, Mr. Bloundel," said the bully, raising his hat — "if you desire it, I will lead you to him."

Unwilling as he was to be obliged to one whom he knew to be leagued with the Earl of Rochester, the grocer's anxiety overcame his scruples, and signifying his acquiescence, Pillichody shouldered his way through the crowd, and did not stop till they reached the

northern aisle, where they were comparatively alone.

"Your apprentice is a fortunate spark, Mr. Bloundel," he said. "No sooner does he lose one mistress than he finds another. Your daughter is already forgotten, and he is at this moment enjoying a tender *tête-à-tête* in Bishop Kempe's chapel with Nizza Macascree, the blind piper's daughter."

"It is false, sir," replied the grocer, incredulously.

"Unbelieving dog!" cried Pillichody, in a furious tone, and clapping his hand upon his sword, "it is fortunate for you that the disparity of our stations prevents me from compelling you to yield me satisfaction for the insult you have offered me. But I caution you to keep better guard upon your tongue for the future, especially when addressing one who has earned his laurels under King Charles the Martyr."

"I have no especial reverence for the monarch you served under," replied Bloundel. "But he would have blushed to own such a follower."

"You may thank my generosity that I do

not crop your ears, base roundhead," rejoined Pillichody. "But I will convince you that I speak the truth, and if you have any shame in your composition, it will be summoned to your cheeks."

So saying, he proceeded to Bishop Kempe's chapel, the door of which was slightly ajar, and desired the grocer to look through the chink. This occurred at the precise time that the apprentice was seized with sudden faintness, and was leaning for support upon Nizza Macascree's shoulder.

"You see how lovingly they are seated together," observed Pillichody, with a smile of triumph. "Bowers of Paphos! I would I were as near the rich widow of Watling Street. Will you speak with him?"

"No," replied Bloundel, turning away, "I have done with him for ever. I have been greatly deceived."

"True," chuckled Pillichody, as soon as the grocer was out of hearing; "but not by your apprentice, Mr. Bloundel. I will go and inform Parravicin and Rochester that I have discovered the girl. The Knight must mind what he is about, or Leonard Holt will prove too much

for him. Either I am greatly out, or the apprentice is already master of Nizza's heart."

To return to Amabel. As soon as she was alone with her mother, she threw herself on her knees before her, and imploring her forgiveness, hastily related all that had occurred.

"But for Leonard Holt," she said, "I should have been duped into a false marriage with the Earl, and my peace of mind would have been for ever destroyed. As it is, I shall never be easy till he is restored to my father's favour. To have done wrong myself is reprehensible enough; but that another should suffer for my fault is utterly inexcusable."

"I lament that your father should be deceived," rejoined Mrs. Bloundel, "and I lament still more that Leonard Holt should be so unjustly treated. Nevertheless, we must act with the utmost caution. I know my husband too well to doubt for a moment that he will hesitate to fulfil his threat. And now, my dear child," she continued, "do not the repeated proofs you have received of this wicked nobleman's perfidy, and of Leonard's devotion—do they not, I say, open your eyes to the truth,

and show you which of the two really loves you, and merits your regard?"

"I will hide nothing from you, mother," replied Amabel. "In spite of his perfidy — in spite of my conviction of his unworthiness, I still love the Earl of Rochester. Nor can I compel myself to feel any regard, stronger than that of friendship, for Leonard Holt."

"You distress me sadly, child," cried Mrs. Bloundel. "What will become of you! I wish my husband would shut up his house. That might put an end to the difficulty. I am not half so much afraid of the plague as I am of the Earl of Rochester. But compose yourself as your father desired, that when he sends for us we may be ready to meet him with cheerfulness."

Mr. Bloundel, however, did *not* send for them. He remained in the shop all day, except at meal times, when he said little, and appeared labouring under a great weight of anxiety. As Amabel took leave of him for the night, he dismissed her with coldness; and though he bestowed his customary blessing upon her, the look that accompanied it was not such as it used to be.

On the following day things continued in the same state. The grocer was cold and inscrutable, and his wife, fearing he was meditating some severe course against Amabel, and aware of his inflexible nature, if a resolution was once formed, shook off her habitual awe, and thus addressed him:—

"I fear you have not forgiven our daughter. Be not too hasty in your judgment. However culpable she may appear, she has been as much deceived as yourself."

"It may be so," replied Bloundel. "Still, she has acted with such indiscretion that I can never place confidence in her again, and without confidence, affection is as nought. Can I say to him who may seek her in marriage, and whom I may approve as a husband,—'Take her! she has never deceived me, and will never deceive you? No. She *has* deceived me, and will, therefore, deceive others. I do not know the precise truth of the story of her abduction (if such it was) by Leonard Holt, neither do I wish to know it, because I might be compelled to act with greater severity than I desire towards her. But I know enough to satisfy me she has been excessively imprudent, and has

placed herself voluntarily in situations of the utmost jeopardy."

"Not voluntarily," returned Mrs. Bloundel. "She has been lured into difficulties by others."

"No more!" interrupted the grocer, sternly. "If you wish to serve her, keep guard upon your tongue. If you have any preparations to make, they must not be delayed. I shall shut up my house to-morrow."

"Whether Leonard returns or not?" asked Mrs. Bloundel.

"I shall wait for no one," returned her husband, peremptorily.

They then separated, and Mrs. Bloundel hastened to her daughter, to acquaint her with the result of the interview.

In the afternoon of the same day, the grocer, who began to feel extremely uneasy about Leonard, again repaired to Saint Paul's, to see whether he could obtain any tidings of him, and learnt, to his great dismay, from one of the vergers, that a young man, answering to the description of the apprentice, had been attacked by the pestilence, and having been taken to the vaults of Saint Faith's, had made his escape from his attendants, and, it was supposed, had

perished. Horror-stricken by this intelligence, he descended to the subterranean church, where he met Judith Malmayns and Chowles, who confirmed the verger's statement.

"The poor young man, I am informed," said Chowles, "threw himself into the Thames, and was picked up by a boat, and afterwards conveyed, in a dying state, to the pest-house in Finsbury-fields, where you will probably find him, if he is still alive."

Mr. Bloundel heard no more. Quitting the cathedral, he hastened to Finsbury-fields, and sought out the building to which he had been directed. It was a solitary farm-house, of considerable size, surrounded by an extensive garden, and had only been recently converted to its present melancholy use. Near it was a barn, also fitted up with beds for the sick. On approaching the pest-house, Mr. Bloundel was greatly struck with the contrast presented by its exterior to the misery he knew to be reigning within. Its situation was charming,—in the midst, as has just been stated, of a large and, until recently, well-cultivated garden, and seen under the influence of a bright and genial May day, the whole place looked the picture of

healthfulness and comfort. But a closer view speedily dispelled the illusion, and showed that it was the abode of disease and death. Horrid sounds saluted the ears; ghastly figures met the eyes; and the fragrance of the flowers was overpowered by the tainted and noisome atmosphere issuing from the open doors and windows. The grocer had scarcely entered the gate, when he was arrested by an appalling shriek, followed by a succession of cries so horrifying that he felt half disposed to fly. But mustering up his resolution, and breathing at a phial of vinegar, he advanced towards the principal door, which stood wide open, and called to one of the assistants. The man, however, was too busy to attend to him, and while waiting his leisure, he saw no fewer than three corpses carried out to an outbuilding in the yard, where they were left till they could be taken away at night for interment.

Sickened by the sight, and blaming himself for venturing near this contagious spot, Mr. Bloundel was about to depart, when a young chirurgeon stepped out to him, and, in reply to his inquiries after Leonard, said —"Twelve persons were brought in here last night, and five

this morning, but I do not remember any of their names. You can go through the rooms and search for your apprentice, if you think proper."

Mr. Bloundel hesitated, but his humanity overcame his apprehension, and murmuring a prayer that he might be preserved from infection, he followed his conductor into the house. Prepared as he was for a dreadful spectacle, the reality far exceeded his anticipations. Along both sides of a large room, occupying nearly the whole of the ground-floor, were rows of pallets, on which were laid the sick, many of whom were tied down to their couches. Almost all seemed in a hopeless state, and the cadaverous hue of their countenances proclaimed that death was not far off. Though the doors and windows were open, and the room was filled with vapours and exhalations, arising from pans of coal and plates of hot iron, on which drugs were burning, nothing could remove the putrid and pestilential smell that pervaded the chamber. The thick vapour settled on the panes of the windows, and on the roof, and fell to the ground in heavy drops. Marching quickly past each bed, the grocer noted the features of its

unfortunate occupant, but though there were many young men, Leonard was not among the number. His conductor then led him to an upper room, where he found the chirurgeons dressing the sores of their patients, most of whom uttered loud shrieks while under their hands. Here an incident occurred which deeply affected the grocer. A poor young woman, who had been brought to the pest-house with her child on the previous evening, had just expired, and the infant, unable to obtain its customary nourishment, uttered the most piteous cries. It was instantly removed by a nurse and proper food given it, but Mr. Bloundel was informed that the plague-tokens had already appeared, and that it would not probably live over the night. "I have no doubt," said the young chirurgeon, "it will be buried with its mother." And so it happened.

The grocer turned away to hide his emotion, and endeavoured through his blinded gaze to discover Leonard, but, as will be anticipated, without success. Stunned by the cries and groans that pierced his ears, and almost stifled by the pestilential effluvia, he rushed out of the house, and gladly accepted a glass of sack

offered him by his conductor, which removed the dreadful nausea that affected him.

"I now remember that the two last persons brought here were taken to the barn," observed the chirurgeon. "I will go with you thither, if you think proper."

The grocer assented, and the chirurgeon crossed the yard, and opened the door of the barn, on the floor of which upwards of twenty beds were laid. Passing between them, Mr. Bloundel narrowly scrutinized every countenance, but, to his great relief, recognized no one. One couch alone remained to be examined. The poor sufferer within it had drawn the coverings over his face, and when they were removed, he was found quite dead! He was a young man, and the agony he had endured in the last struggle, was shown by his collapsed frame and distorted features. It was not, however, Leonard, and, so far satisfied, though greatly shocked, Mr. Bloundel hurried out.

"Thank Heaven! he is not here!" he exclaimed, to his conductor.

"You have not seen the dead bodies in the outhouse," returned the other. "It is possible his may be among them."

"I trust not," rejoined the grocer, shuddering. "But as I have gone thus far, I will not leave my errand unaccomplished. Suffer me to look at them."

The chirurgeon then led the way to a spacious outbuilding, once used for cattle, in the midst of which stood a large frame supporting six bodies, covered only with a sheet. Mr. Bloundel could not overcome his repugnance to enter this shed; but the chirurgeon, who appeared habituated to such scenes, and to regard them lightly, threw off the sheet, and raised the corpses, one by one, that he might the better view them. One peculiarity Mr. Bloundel noticed;—namely, that the limbs of these unfortunate victims of the pestilence did not stiffen as would have been the case, if they had died of any other disorder, while the blotches that appeared on the livid flesh made them objects almost too horrible to look upon. In many cases, the features were frightfully distorted — the tongues of the poor wretches swollen and protruding — the hands clenched, and the toes bent towards the soles of the feet. Everything denoted the dreadful pangs that must have attended dissolution.

Greatly relieved to find that the whole of

this ghastly group were strangers to him, Mr. Bloundel thanked the chirurgeon, and departed. Convinced that he had been deceived by the coffin-maker, he now began to hope that the whole story was false, but he determined not to rest till he had thoroughly investigated the matter. Before doing so, however, he thought it advisable to return home, and accordingly shaped his course towards Cripplegate, and passing through the postern, stopped at an apothecary's shop and got his apparel fumigated, and sprinkled with spirits of hartshorn and sulphur.

On reaching Wood Street, he noticed with some uneasiness a number of persons gathered together before his dwelling. His fears were speedily relieved by finding that the assemblage was collected by a preacher, who was pronouncing an exhortation to them in tones almost as loud and emphatic as those of Solomon Eagle. The preacher's appearance was very remarkable, and attracted the attention of the grocer, who joined the crowd to listen to him. As far as could be judged, he was a middle-aged man, with black hair floating over his shoulders, earnest features, and a grey eye

of extraordinary brilliancy. His figure was slight and erect, and his gestures as impassioned as his looks. He spoke with great rapidity, and his eloquence, combined with his fervent manner and expression, completely entranced his audience. He was habited in a cassock and bands, and had taken off his cap, which was held by an attendant who stood near the stool on which he was mounted. The latter differed materially from his master. His closely-cropped hair, demure looks, sugar-loaf hat, and suit of rusty sable seemed to proclaim him a Puritan; but his twinkling eye,—for he had but one, and wore a black patch over the orifice,—his inflamed cheeks, and mulberry-nose contradicted the idea.

As soon as the preacher distinguished Mr. Bloundel, he addressed his discourse to him; and alluding to his religious habits and general excellence of character, held him up as an example to the others. The grocer would fain have retreated, but the preacher besought him to stay, and was proceeding in the same strain when a sudden interruption took place. A slight disturbance occurring amid the crowd, the attendant attempted to check it, and in doing so, re-

ceived a sound buffet on the ears. In endeavouring to return the blow, he struck another party, who instantly retaliated, and a general fray commenced, — some taking one side, some the other. In the midst of the confusion, three persons forced their way towards the preacher, knocked him from his stool, and, assailing him with most opprobrious epithets, dealt him several seemingly-severe blows, and would have further maltreated him, if Mr. Bloundel had not interposed, and, pushing aside his assailants, given him his hand, and led him into his dwelling, the door of which he closed. Shortly afterwards, the crowd dispersing, the preacher's companion entered the shop in search of his master.

"I hope you have sustained no injury during this tumult, reverend and dear sir?" he asked, with great apparent solicitude.

"I am not much hurt," replied the preacher; "but I received a blow on the head, which has stunned me. The faintness will go off presently. You were the cause of this disturbance, Bambolio."

"I, Doctor Maplebury?" replied Bambolio— "I endeavoured to stop it. But your reverence

looks extremely ill. I am sure, sir," he added, to Mr. Bloundel, " after the high character my master gave of you in his discourse, and which I am persuaded you deserve, you will extend your hospitality towards him."

" Readily," replied the grocer. " Here, Blaize, assist the reverend gentleman within, and bid your mistress come down stairs immediately."

Doctor Maplebury was then conveyed between the porter and Bambolio into the inner room, where he sunk into a chair in a complete state of exhaustion. The next moment, Mrs. Bloundel made her appearance with Amabel. The latter no sooner beheld the preacher than she started and trembled so violently, that she could scarcely support herself; but her mother, who only saw a fainting man, flew to his assistance, and called to Patience to bring restoratives. These applied, Doctor Maplebury was soon able to rouse himself sufficiently to gaze round the room, and fix his eyes on Amabel.

" So, our old friends are here again," said Patience, in a low tone to Blaize, as they left the room together.

"Old friends!—What do you mean?" rejoined the porter.

"Why, the Earl of Rochester and Major Pillichody," replied Patience. "I knew them at a glance, and so did Mistress Amabel. But if I hadn't discovered them, the Major would soon have let me into the secret, by the way in which he squeezed my hand."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Blaize, angrily. "I'll go and acquaint my master with the trick directly."

"Do so," replied Patience, "and the house will be shut up to-morrow. Our only chance of averting that calamity is in the Earl."

CHAPTER XI.

HOW THE GROCER SHUT UP HIS HOUSE.

Placed in a warm bed, and carefully tended by the humane physician, Leonard Holt slept tranquilly for some hours, and when he awoke, though so weak as scarcely to be able to lift an arm, he was free from all ailment. Feeling ravenously hungry, he made known his wants, and provisions being set before him, he was allowed to eat and drink in moderation. Greatly revived by the meal, he arose and attired himself in habiliments provided for him by Hodges, who finding him fully equal to conversation, questioned him as to all that had occurred prior to his seizure.

"You have acted nobly," observed the Doctor, at the close of his recital, "and if Amabel had a spark of generosity in her composition, she would worthily requite you. But I do not

expect it. How different is her conduct from that of the piper's pretty daughter. The latter really loves you, and I would advise you as a friend to turn your thoughts to her. She will make you happy; whereas the indulgence of your present hopeless passion — for hopeless it is — can only lead to wretchedness."

"Would I could follow your advice!" replied Leonard, "but alas! I cannot. Amabel does not love the Earl of Rochester more blindly, more constantly, than I love her; and I could as soon change my nature as transfer my affection to another."

"I am truly sorry for it," rejoined Hodges, in a tone of deep sympathy. "And you still desire to return to your master?"

"Unquestionably," replied Leonard. "If I am banished the house, I shall wander round it night and day like a ghost."

"I will accompany you there this evening," rejoined Hodges, "and trust I shall be able to arrange matters without compromising Amabel. I wish I could forward your suit more efficiently. But I see no chance of it, and to deal plainly with you, I do not think a marriage with her would be for your happiness.

The brilliant qualities of your noble rival at present so dazzle her eyes, that your own solid worth is completely overlooked. It will be well if her father can preserve her from ruin."

"The Earl shall die by my hand rather than he shall succeed in his infamous purpose," cried Leonard, fiercely.

"No more of this!" exclaimed Hodges. "If you would have me take an interest in you, you will never give utterance to such a sentiment again. Amabel has another guardian, more powerful even than her father—the plague. Ere long, the Earl, who has a sufficient value for his own safety, will fly the city."

"I hope the pestilence will number him among its victims," observed Leonard, in a sombre tone.

At this juncture, the old porter entered the room, and informed his master that the piper's daughter was below, and had called to inquire after the apprentice.

Hodges desired she might be shown up-stairs, and the next moment Nizza was ushered into the room. On beholding the improved appearance of Leonard, she could not repress an exclamation of delight, while a deep blush suffused her cheeks.

"You are surprised to find him quite well," observed Hodges, with a smile. "Nay, you may approach him with safety. There is no fear of contagion now."

"Having satisfied myself on that point, I will take my leave," rejoined Nizza, in some confusion.

"Not till you have allowed me to return my thanks, I trust," said Leonard, advancing towards her and taking her hand. "I owe my life to you."

"Then pay the debt by devoting it to her," rejoined Hodges. "Excuse me for a few minutes. I have business to attend to, but will be back again directly."

Left alone together, the young couple felt so much embarrassment that for some moments neither could utter a word. At length, Nizza, who had suffered her hand to remain in that of Leonard, gently withdrew it.

"Circumstances have given me a claim to your confidence," she faltered, "and you will not misconstrue my motive, when I ask whether you still retain the same affection as formerly for Amabel."

"Unfortunately for myself I do," replied Leonard.

"And unfortunately for me too," sighed Nizza. "Doctor Hodges says he can restore you to your master's favour. You will therefore return home, and we shall meet no more."

"In these precarious times, those who part, though even for a few days, can feel no certainty of meeting again," rejoined Leonard. "But I hope we shall be more fortunate."

"You mistake me," replied Nizza. "Henceforth, I shall sedulously avoid you. Till I saw you, I was happy, and indifferent to all else —my affections being centered in my father and in my dog. Now, I am restless and miserable. My former pursuits are abandoned, and I think only of you. Despise me if you will after this frank avowal. But believe that I would not have made it, if I had not resolved to see you no more."

"Despise you!" echoed Leonard. "Oh no! I shall ever feel the deepest gratitude towards you, But, perhaps, it is better we should meet no more."

"And yet you throw yourself in the way of Amabel," cried Nizza. "You have not resolution to fly from the danger which you counsel me to shun."

"It is too true," replied Leonard; "but she is beset by temptations from which I hope to preserve her."

"That excuse will not avail with me," returned Nizza, bitterly. "You cannot live without her. But I have said enough—more than enough," she added, correcting herself. "I must now bid you farewell—for ever. May you be happy with Amabel—and may she love you, as I love you!"

As she said this, she would have rushed out of the room, if she had not been stopped by Doctor Hodges.

"Whither so fast?" he inquired "Oh! let me go — let me go, I implore of you!" she cried, bursting into an agony of tears.

"Not till you have composed yourself," rejoined the Doctor. "What is the matter? But I need not ask. I wonder Leonard can be insensible to charms like yours, coupled with such devotion. Everything seems to be at cross purposes, and it requires some one more skilled in the affairs of the heart than an old bachelor like myself to set them right. Sit down. I have a few questions of importance to ask you before you depart."

And partly by entreaty, partly by compulsion, he made her take a chair, and as soon as she was sufficiently composed to answer him, questioned her as to what she knew relating to Judith Malmayns and Chowles.

"Mr. Quatremain, the minor-canon, has died of the plague in one of the vaults of Saint Faith's," he observed, "and I more than suspect, from the appearance of the body, has not met with fair play."

"Your suspicion is well founded, sir," replied Nizza. "Solomon Eagle told me that the unfortunate man's end was hastened by the plague-nurse. Nor is this her sole crime. She was hired to make away with Leonard Holt in the same manner, and would have accomplished her purpose but for the intervention of Solomon Eagle."

"Neither she nor her partner in guilt, the coffin-maker, shall escape justice this time," replied Hodges. "I will instantly cause her to be arrested, and I trust she will expiate her offences at Tyburn. But, to change the subject. I am sincerely interested about you, Nizza, and wish I could make Leonard as sensible of your merits as I am myself. I still hope a change will take place in his feelings."

"My heart tells me the contrary," replied Nizza. "There is no hope for either of us. Farewell, Leonard!" And she rushed out of the room.

Soon after this, Hodges quitted the apprentice, and going before a magistrate, detailed all that had come to his knowledge concerning the the criminal practices of Judith Malmayns and Chowles. In the course of the day, the accused parties were arrested, and after a long examination, conveyed to Newgate. Solomon Eagle could not be found, neither could Sir Paul Parravicin. It appeared that Mr. Quatremain's residence had been entered on that very morning, and the box of treasure discovered in Saint Faith's abstracted. But though the strongest suspicion of the robbery attached to Chowles and Judith, it could not be brought home to them.

We shall now proceed to Wood Street, and ascertain what took place there. Refreshments were placed before the supposed Doctor Maplebury by the grocer, while his attendant was sent to the kitchen, and directions given to Blaize to take every care of him. Old Josyna was occupied about her own concerns, and

Pillichody, perceiving from the porter's manner that his disguise was detected, laid aside concealment altogether, and endeavoured to win the other over to his patron's interests.

"If this marriage takes place," he said, "I am authorized by my noble friend to state that he will appoint you his steward with a large salary, and that will be a very different situation from the one you hold at present. A nobleman's steward! Think of that. You will have a retinue of servants under your control, and will live quite as well as his lordship."

"I have some scruples," hesitated Blaize.

"Scruples! pshaw!" cried Pillichody. "You can have no hesitation in benefiting yourself. If you remain here, the house will be shut up, and you will be kept a close prisoner for months in the very heart of an infected city, and I dare say will be buried in yonder cellar; whereas, if you go with the Earl of Rochester, you will dwell in a magnificent country mansion — a palace, I ought to call it,—enjoy every luxury, and remain there till the plague is over."

"That last reason decides me," replied Blaize.

"But I suppose his lordship will provide himself with a medicine chest?"

"He has already got one as large as this table," said Pillichody, "and you shall have the key of it."

"Enough!" exclaimed Blaize. "I am yours."

"Pray, what am I to be?" asked Patience, who had listened to the foregoing conversation with a smile at Blaize's credulity.

"You, sweetheart!" exclaimed Pillichody. "I will take care of you. You shall be my housekeeper."

"Hold!" cried Blaize. "I cannot permit that. Patience and I are engaged."

"Since you are promoted to such an important situation, you can make a better match," observed Patience. "I release you from the engagement."

"I don't choose to be released," returned Blaize, "I will marry you on the same day that the Earl weds Amabel."

"That will be to-night, or to-morrow at the latest," said Pillichody. "Consent, sweetheart," he added in a whisper to Patience, "if we can once get you and your pretty mistress

out of the house, we will leave this simpleton fool in the lurch."

"No, I will never consent to any such thing," returned Patience, in the same tone.

"What 's that you are saying?" inquired Blaize, suspiciously.

"Major Pillichody says he will marry me, if you won't," returned Patience.

"I have just told you I will," rejoined Blaize. "But he must not continue his attentions. I feel I shall be very jealous."

"I am glad to hear it," returned Patience, bursting into a loud laugh, "for that proves you love me."

"Well," observed Pillichody, "I won't interfere with a friend; and as there is no knowing what may occur, it will be well to prepare accordingly."

So saying, he fell to work upon the provisions loading the board, and ate and drank as if determined to lay in a stock for the next two days.

Meantime, the Earl made rapid progress in the good opinion both of Mr. Bloundel and his wife. Adapting his discourse precisely to their views, and exerting his matchless conversational

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powers to their full extent, he so charmed them that they thought they could listen to him for ever. While thus engaged, he continued ever and anon to steal a glance at Amabel, and on these occasions, his eyes were quite as eloquent and intelligible as his tongue.

Among other topics interesting to the grocer, the persecution to which his daughter had been recently subjected was brought forward. Mr. Bloundel could not reprobate the Earl's conduct more strongly than his guest did; and he assailed himself with such virulence that, in spite of her uneasiness, Amabel could not repress a smile. In short, he so accommodated himself to the grocer's opinions, and so won upon his regard, that the latter offered him an asylum in his house during the continuance of the pestilence. This was eagerly accepted, and the Earl, hazarding a look at Amabel at the moment, perceived her change colour and become greatly agitated. Mrs. Bloundel also noticed her confusion, but attributing it to any other than the right cause, begged her, in a low tone, to control herself.

At length, the opportunity for which the Earl had been secretly sighing, occurred. Mr. Bloun-

del called his wife out of the room for a moment, and as their eldest son, Stephen, was in the shop, and the two other children upstairs, Amabel was left alone with her lover. The door was no sooner closed than he sprang towards her and threw himself at her feet.

"Shall I avail myself of your father's offer, sweetheart?" he cried. "Shall I remain here with you—the happiest of prisoners;—or will you once more accompany me? This time, our marriage shall not be interrupted."

"Perhaps not, my lord," she replied, gravely; "but it will be a mock ceremonial like the last. Do not attempt to deceive me. I am fully aware of your intentions, and after the awful fate of the wretched instrument of your purposed criminality, you will not readily get another person to tempt in like manner the vengeance of heaven. I have had a severe struggle with myself. But at length, I have triumphed over my irresolution. I will not disguise from you that I love you still, — and must ever, I fear, continue to love you. But I will not be yours on the terms you propose. Neither will I leave this house with you, nor suffer you to remain in it, in any other than

your proper character. On my father's return I will disclose all to him. If your designs are honourable, I am sure he will no longer oppose my union with you. If not, we part for ever."

"Be prudent, sweet girl, I entreat of you," cried the Earl, imploringly. "Your indiscretion will ruin all. There are a thousand reasons why your father should not be consulted on the matter."

"There are none that weigh with me," she interrupted, decidedly. "I have been bewildered,—beside myself,—but thank heaven, I have recovered before it is too late."

"You are beside yourself at this moment," cried Rochester, unable to control his anger and mortification, "and will bitterly repent your folly. Neither your supplications nor my rank will have any weight with your father, prejudiced as he is against me. Fly with me, and I swear to make you mine, without a moment's loss of time. Will not my plighted word content you?"

"No, my lord, you have broken it already," returned Amabel. "My father shall know the truth."

A dark shade passed over Rochester's counte-

nance, and a singular and most forbidding expression, which Amabel had once before noticed, took possession of it. His love for her seemed changed to hate, and she tremblingly averted her gaze. At this juncture, the door opened, and the grocer and his wife entered the room. The former started on seeing Amabel and the supposed preacher in such close propinquity, and a painful suspicion of the truth crossed his mind. He was not, however, kept long in suspense. Throwing off his wig, and letting his own fair ringlets fall over his shoulders, the Earl tore open his cassock, and disclosed his ordinary rich attire. At the same time, his face underwent an equally striking change,—each feature resuming its original expression; and the grocer, though he witnessed the whole transformation, could scarcely believe that the same individual he had recently beheld stood before him.

"You now know who I am, Mr. Bloundel, and what brought me hither," said Rochester, with a haughty salutation.

"I do, my lord," replied the grocer; "and I give you full credit for your daring and ingenuity. After the manner in which I have

been imposed upon myself, I can make allowance for others." He then turned to Amabel, and said, in a severe tone, "You are no longer my daughter."

"Father," she cried, rushing towards him and throwing herself at his feet, "do not cast me off for ever. I am not now to blame. It is owing to my determination to disclose all to you that the Earl has thus revealed himself. I might have deceived you further — might have fled with him."

"Forgive her! oh forgive her!" cried Mrs. Bloundel—"or, if any ill happens to her, you will be answerable for it."

"Is this the truth, my lord?" asked the grocer.

Rochester bowed stiffly in acquiescence.

"Then you are again my child," said Bloundel, raising her and pressing her to his bosom. "What are your intentions towards her?" he continued, addressing the Earl.

"They may be readily surmised," replied Rochester, with a scornful laugh.

"Will you wed her, if I agree to the union?" asked Bloundel, trembling with concentrated rage.

Amabel looked at her lover as if her life hung on his answer.

Rochester affected not to hear the question, but, as it was repeated still more peremptorily, he repeated carelessly,—"I will consider of it."

"Deceived! deceived!" cried Amabel, falling on her mother's neck, and bursting into tears.

"This outrage shall not pass unpunished," cried Bloundel. And before the Earl could draw his sword or offer any resistance, he threw himself upon him, and hurling him to the ground, set his foot upon his bosom.

"Do not kill him," shrieked Amabel, terrified by the stern expression of her father's countenance.

"What are you about to do?" gasped Rochester, struggling ineffectually to get free.

"Bid Stephen bring a cord," cried the grocer.

"You are not going to hang him?" inquired Mrs. Bloundel.

"Do as I bid you," rejoined her husband, "and lose no time."

As she was about leave the room, the door opened, and Doctor Hodges entered, followed by Leonard and Stephen.

"Mercy on us! what 's the matter?" cried the former, in astonishment.

"You are just arrived in time to prevent mischief," replied Mrs. Bloundel. "Pray, interfere between them. My husband will attend to you!"

"Arise, my lord," said Mr. Bloundel, removing his foot from the prostrate nobleman—"you are sufficiently punished by being found in this disgraceful condition. Remember that your life has been at my disposal."

Thus liberated, Rochester sprang to his feet, and regarding the group with a menacing and disdainful look, walked up to Amabel, and saying to her, "You shall yet be mine," strode out of the room. He then marched along the passage, and called to Pillichody, who instantly answered the summons. Accompanied by Hodges, the grocer followed them to the shop, where the bully, not departing so quickly as he desired, and refusing to be more expeditious, he kicked him into the street. This done, and the door fastened, he tarried only till he had received all needful explanations from the friendly physician, and then returning to the inner room,

warmly greeted Leonard, and congratulated him on his extraordinary recovery from the plague.

Happiness was thus once more restored to every member of the grocer's family, except Amabel, who still continued downcast and dejected, and entreated permission to retire to her own room. A cheerful evening was then passed by the others, and the doctor did not offer to take his departure till the clock struck eleven.

"It is the last night I shall spend here for some months," he said, "perhaps the last I shall ever spend here, and I have stayed longer than I intended, but I did not like to abridge my enjoyment." After shaking hands cordially with the whole party, he added, in an undertone, as he took leave of Leonard, "Do not forget Nizza Macascree."

On the following day, the grocer nailed up the shutters, and locked and barred the doors of his house.

END OF THE SECOND BOOK.

Book the Third.

JUNE 1665.

CHAPTER I.

THE IMPRISONED FAMILY.

The first few days of their confinement were passed by the grocer's family in a very uncomfortable manner. No one, except Mr. Bloundel, appeared reconciled to the plan, and even he found it more difficult of accomplishment than he had anticipated. The darkness of the rooms, and the want of ventilation caused by the closed windows and barred doors, gave the house the air of a prison, and occasioned a sense of oppression almost intolerable. Blaize declared it "was worse than being in Newgate, and that he must take an additional rufus a day to set right his digestion;" while Patience affirmed "that it was like being buried alive, and that she would not stand it." Mr. Bloundel paid no attention to their complaints, but addressed himself seriously to the remedy. Insisting

upon the utmost attention being paid to cleanliness, he had an abundant supply of water drawn, with which the floors of every room and passage were washed down daily. By such means, the house was kept cool and wholesome; and its inmates becoming habituated to the gloom, in a great degree recovered their cheerfulness.

The daily routine of the establishment was as follows. The grocer arose at dawn, and proceeded to call up the whole of his family. They then assembled in a large room on the second story, where he offered up thanks that they had been spared during the night, and prayed for their preservation during the day. He next assigned a task to each, and took care to see it afterwards duly fulfilled; well knowing that constant employment was the best way to check repining and promote contentment. Heretofore, the servants had always taken their meals in the kitchen, but now they always sat down to table with him. "I will make no distinction at this season," he said; "all shall fare as I fare, and enjoy the same comforts as myself. And I trust that my dwelling may be as sure a refuge amid this pestilential storm as the ark of the patriarch proved when Hea-

ven's vengeance was called forth in the mighty flood."

Their devotions ended, the whole party repaired to one of the lower rooms where a plentiful breakfast was provided, of which they all partook. The business of the day then began, and as has just been observed, no one was suffered to remain idle. The younger children were allowed to play and exercise themselves as much as they chose in the garret, and Blaize and Patience were occasionally invited to join them. A certain portion of the evening was also devoted to harmless recreation and amusements. The result may be anticipated. No one suffered in health, while all improved in spirits. Prayers, as usual, concluded the day, and the family retired to rest at an early hour.

This system of things may appear sufficiently monotonous, but it was precisely adapted to the exigencies of the case, and produced a most salutary effect. Regular duties and regular employments being imposed upon each, their constant recurrence, so far from being irksome, soon became agreeable. After awhile, the whole family seemed to grow indifferent to the

external world — to live only for each other, and to think only of each other — and to Leonard Holt, indeed, that house was all the world. Those walls contained everything dear to him, and he would have been quite content never to leave them if Amabel had been always near. He made no attempt to renew his suit — seldom or ever exchanging a word with her, and might have been supposed to have become wholly indifferent to her. But it was not so. His heart was consumed by the same flame as before. No longer, however, a prey to jealousy — no longer apprehensive of the Earl — he felt so happy, in comparison with what he had been, that he almost prayed that the term of their imprisonment might be prolonged. Sometimes, the image of Nizza Macascree would intrude upon him, and he thought, with a feeling akin to remorse, of what she might suffer — for he was too well acquainted with the pangs of unrequited love not to sympathise deeply with her. As to Amabel, she addressed herself assiduously to the tasks enjoined by her father, and allowed her mind to dwell as little as possible on the past, but employed all her spare time in devotional exercises.

It will be remembered that the grocer had reserved a communication with the street, by means of a shutter, opening from a small room in the upper story. Hither he would now frequently repair, and though he did not as yet think it necessary to have recourse to all the precautionary measures he intended eventually to adopt,— such as flashing a pistol when he looked forth, — yet he never opened the shutter, without holding a phial of vinegar, or a handkerchief wetted with the same liquid, to his face.

Before closing his house he had hired a porter, who occupied the hutch at his door, and held himself in readiness to execute any commission, or perform any service, that might be required. Fresh vegetables, poultry, eggs, butter, and milk were brought by a higgler from the country, and raised by means of a basket or a can attached to the pulley. Butcher's meat was fetched him from Newgate-market by the porter. This man, whose name was Ralph Dallison, had been formerly in the employ of the grocer, who, knowing his character, could place entire reliance on him. Dallison reported the progress of the pestilence daily, and acquainted

him with the increasing amount of the Bills of Mortality. Several houses, he said, were infected in Cheapside, and two in Wood Street, one of which was but a short distance from the grocer's habitation. A watchman was stationed at the door and the red cross marked upon it, and on the following night the grocer heard the sound of the doleful bell announcing the approach of the pest-cart.

The weather still continued as serene and beautiful as ever, but no refreshing showers fell—no soft and healthful breezes blew—and it was now found to be true, what had been prognosticated,—namely, that with the heats of summer the plague would fearfully increase. The grocer was not incommoded in the same degree as his neighbours. By excluding the light, he excluded the heat, and the care which he took to have his house washed down kept it cool. The middle of June had now arrived, and such dismal accounts were now brought him of the havoc occasioned by the scourge, that he would no longer take in fresh provisions, but began to open his stores. Dallison told him that the alarm was worse than ever — that vast numbers were endeavouring to leave the city, but no one

could now do so without a certificate, which was never granted if the slightest suspicion attached to the party.

"If things go on in this way," said the porter, "London will soon be deserted. No business is conducted as it used to be, and everybody is viewed with distrust. The preachers, who ought to be the last to quit, have left their churches, and the Lord's day is no longer observed. Many medical men even have departed, declaring their services are no longer of any avail. All public amusements are suspended, and the taverns are only open to the profane and dissolute, who deride God's judgements, and declare they have no fear. Robberies, murders, and other crimes, have greatly increased, and the most dreadful deeds are now committed with impunity. You have done wisely, sir, in protecting yourself against them."

"I have reason to be thankful that I have done so," replied Bloundel. And he closed his shutter to meditate on what he had just heard.

And there was abundant food for reflection. Around him lay a great and populous city, hemmed in, as by a fire, by an exterminating plague, that spared neither age, condition, nor

sex. No man could tell what the end of all this would be — neither at what point the wrath of the offended Deity would stop — nor whether He would relent, till He had utterly destroyed a people who so contemned His word. Scarcely daring to hope for leniency, and filled with a dreadful foreboding of what would ensue, the grocer addressed a long and fervent supplication to Heaven, imploring a mitigation of its wrath.

On joining his family, his grave manner and silence showed how powerfully he had been affected. No one questioned him as to what had occurred, but all understood he had received some distressing intelligence.

Amid his anxiety one circumstance gave him unalloyed satisfaction. This was the change wrought in Amabel's character. It has been stated that she had become extremely devout, and passed the whole of the time not appointed for other occupations, in the study of the scriptures, or in prayer. Her manner was extremely sedate, and her conversation assumed a tone that gave her parents, and especially her father, inexpressible pleasure. Mrs. Bloundel would have been equally delighted with the change,

if it had tended to forward her own favourite scheme of an union with Leonard; but as this was not the case, though she rejoiced in the improvement, she still was not entirely satisfied. She could not help noting also, that her daughter had become pale and thin, and though she uttered no complaint, Mrs. Bloundel began to fear her health was declining. Leonard Holt looked on in wonder and admiration, and if possible his love increased, though his hopes diminished; for though Amabel was kinder to him than before, her kindness seemed the result rather of a sense of duty than regard.

Upon one occasion they were left alone together, and instead of quitting the room as she had been accustomed, Amabel called to Leonard, who was about to depart, and requested him to stay. The apprentice instantly obeyed; the colour forsook his cheeks; and his heart beat violently.

"You desire to speak with me, Amabel," he said: — "Have you relented?— Is there any hope for me?"

"Alas! no," she replied; "and it is on that very point I have now detained you. You will, I am sure, rejoice to learn that I have at

length fully regained my peace of mind, and have become sensible of the weakness of which I have been guilty — of the folly, worse than folly, I have committed. My feelings are now under proper restraint, and viewing myself with other eyes, I see how culpable I have been. Oh! Leonard, if you knew the effort it has been to conquer the fatal passion that consumed me — if I were to tell you of the pangs it has cost me — of the tears I have shed — of the heart-quakes endured, you would pity me."

"I do, indeed, pity you," replied Leonard, "for my own sufferings have been equally severe. But I have not been as successful as you in subduing them."

"Because you have not pursued the right means, Leonard," she rejoined. "Fix your thoughts on high; build your hopes of happiness on heaven; strengthen your faith; and you will soon find the victory easy. A short time ago, I thought only of worldly pleasures, and was ensnared by vanity and admiration,— enchained to one whom I knew to be worthless, and who pursued me only to destroy me. Religion has preserved me from the snare, and religion will restore you to happiness. But you

must devote yourself to Heaven, not lightly, but with your whole soul. You must forget me,—forget yourself,—forget all but the grand object. And this is a season of all others, when it is most needful to lead a life of piety, to look upon yourself as dead to this world, and to be ever prepared for that to come. I shudder to think what might have been my portion had I perished in my sin."

"Yours is a most happy frame of mind," returned Leonard, "and I would I had a chance of attaining the same tranquillity. But if you have conquered your love for the Earl — if your heart is disengaged, why deny me a hope?"

"My heart is *not* disengaged, Leonard," she replied; "it is engrossed by Heaven. While the plague is raging around us thus, — while thousands are daily carried off by that devouring scourge, — and while every hour, every moment, may be our last, our thoughts ought always to be fixed above. I have ceased to love the Earl, but I can never love another, and therefore it would be unjust to you, to whom I owe so much, to hold out hopes that never can be realized."

"Alas! alas!" cried Leonard, unable to control his emotion.

"Compose yourself, dear Leonard," she cried, greatly moved. "I would I could comply with your wishes. But, alas! I cannot. I could only give you," she added, in a tone so thrilling, that it froze the blood in his veins—"a breaking, perhaps, a broken heart!"

"Gracious heaven!" exclaimed Leonard, becoming pale as death; "is it come to this?"

"Again, I beg you to compose yourself," she rejoined calmly—"and I entreat you not to let what I have told you pass your lips. I would not alarm my father, or my dear and anxious mother, on my account. And there may be no reason for alarm. But should there be so, I am prepared. Promise me, therefore, you will be silent."

Leonard reluctantly gave the required pledge.

"I have unwittingly been the cause of much affliction to you," pursued Amabel—"and would gladly see you happy, and there is one person, I think, who would make you so,—I mean Nizza Macascree. From what she said to me when we were alone together in the vaults of Saint Faith's, I am sure she is sincerely

attached to you. Could you not requite her love?"

"No," replied Leonard. "There is no change in affection like mine."

"Pursue the course I have advised," replied Amabel, "and you will find all your troubles vanish. Farewell! I depend upon your silence!"

And she quitted the room, leaving Leonard in a state of indescribable anxiety.

Faithful, however, to his promise, he made no mention of his uneasiness to the grocer or his wife, but indulged his grief in secret. Ignorant of what was passing, Mr. Bloundel, who was still not without apprehension of some further attempt on the part of the Earl, sent Dallison to make inquiries after him, and learnt that he was at Whitehall, but that the court had fixed to remove to Hampton Court at the end of June. The porter, also, informed him, that the city was emptying fast,—that the Lord Mayor's residence was literally besieged with applications for bills of health,—that officers were stationed at the gates,—and that, beside these, barriers and turnpikes were erected on all the main roads, at which the cer-

tificates were required to be exhibited, — and that such persons as escaped without them were driven back by the inhabitants of the neighbouring villages, who refused to supply them with necessaries; and as they could not return home, many had perished of want, or perhaps of the pestilence, in the open fields. Horses and coaches, he added, were not to be procured, except at exorbitant prices; and thousands had departed on foot, locking up their houses, and leaving their effects behind them.

"In consequence of this," added Dallison, several houses have been broken open; and though the watch has been trebled, still they cannot be in all places at once; and strong as the force is, it is not adequate to the present emergency. Bands of robbers stalk the streets at night, taking vehicles with them, built to resemble pest-carts, and beating off the watch, they break open the houses and carry off any goods they please."

This intelligence greatly alarmed the grocer, and he began to fear his plans would be defeated in an unexpected manner. He engaged Dallison to procure another trusty companion to take his place at night, and furnished him

with money to purchase arms. He no longer slept as tranquilly as before, but frequently repaired to his post of observation to see that the watchman was at his post, and that all was secure. For the last few days, he had remarked with some uneasiness that a youth frequently passed the house and gazed at the barred windows, and he at first imagined he might be leagued with the nocturnal marauders he had heard of, but the prepossessing appearance of the stripling, who could not be more than sixteen, and who was singularly slightly made, soon dispelled the idea. Still, as he constantly appeared at the same spot, the grocer began to have a new apprehension, and to suspect he was an emissary of the Earl of Rochester, and he sent Dallison to inquire his business. The youth returned an evasive answer, and withdrew; but the next day he was there again. On this occasion, Mr. Blound-del pointed him out to Leonard Holt, and asked him if he had seen him before. The youth's back being towards them, the apprentice unhesitatingly answered in the negative, but as the subject of investigation turned the next moment, and looked up, revealing features of

feminine delicacy and beauty, set off by long flowing jet-black ringlets, Leonard started, and coloured.

"I was mistaken," he said, "I *have* seen him before."

"Is he one of the Earl of Rochester's pages?" asked Mr. Bloundel.

"No," replied Leonard, "and you need not be uneasy about him. I am sure he intends no harm."

Thus satisfied, the grocer thought no more about the matter. He then arranged with Leonard that he should visit the window at certain hours on alternate nights with himself, and appointed the following night as that on which the apprentice's duties should commence.

On the same night, however, an alarming incident occurred, which kept the grocer and his apprentice for a long time on the watch. The family had just retired to rest when the report of fire-arms was heard close to the street door, and Mr. Bloundel, hastily calling up Leonard, they repaired to the room overlooking the street, and found that a desperate struggle was going on below. The moon being overclouded,

and the lantern extinguished, it was too dark to discern the figures of the combatants, and in a few seconds all became silent, except the groans of a wounded man. Mr. Bloundel then called out to know what was the matter, and ascertained from the sufferer, who proved to be his own watchman, that the adjoining house, being infected, had been shut up by the authorities, and its owner, unable to bear the restraint, had burst open the door, shot the watchman stationed at it, and firing another pistol at the poor wretch who was making the statement, because he endeavoured to oppose his flight, had subsequently attacked him with his sword. It was a great grief to Mr. Bloundel not to be able to aid the unfortunate watchman, and he had almost determined to hazard a descent by the pulley, when a musical voice was heard below, and the grocer soon understood that the youth, about whom his curiosity had been excited, was raising the sufferer, and endeavouring to staunch his wounds. Finding this impossible, however, at Mr. Bloundel's request, he went in search of assistance, and presently afterwards returned with a posse of men, bearing halberts and lanterns, who carried off the

wounded man, and afterwards started in pursuit of the murderer.

Mr. Bloundel then entered into conversation with the youth, who informed him that his name was Flitcroft,—that he was without a home, all his relations having died of the plague, — and that he was anxious to serve as a watchman, in place of the poor wretch who had just been removed. Leonard remonstrated against this arrangement, but Mr. Bloundel was so much pleased with Flitcroft's conduct that he would listen to no objection. Accordingly, provisions were lowered down in the basket to the poor youth, and he stationed himself in the hutch. Nothing material occurred during the day. Flitcroft resigned his post to Dallison, but returned in the evening.

At midnight, Leonard took his turn to watch. It was a bright moonlight night, but though he occasionally looked out into the street, and perceived Flitcroft below, he gave no intimation of his presence. All at once, however, he was alarmed by a loud cry, and opening the shutter, perceived the youth struggling with two persons, whom he recognized as Sir Paul Parravicin and Pillichody.

He shouted to them to release their captive, but they laughed at his vociferations, and in spite of his resistance dragged the youth away. Maddened at the sight, Leonard lowered the rope as quickly as he could with the intention of descending by it. At this moment, Flitcroft turned an agonized look behind him, and perceiving what had been done, broke suddenly from his captors, and before he could be prevented, sprang into the basket, and laid hold of the rope. Leonard, who had seen the movement, and divined its object, drew up the pulley with the quickness of thought; and so expeditiously was the whole accomplished, that ere the knight and his companion reached the spot, Flitcroft was above their heads, and the next moment was pulled through the window, and in safety by the side of Leonard.

CHAPTER II.

HOW FIRES WERE LIGHTED IN THE STREETS.

Nizza Macascree, for it is useless to affect further mystery, as soon as she could find utterance, murmured her thanks to the apprentice, whose satisfaction at her deliverance was greatly diminished by his fears lest his master should disapprove of what he had done. Seeing his uneasiness, and guessing the cause, Nizza hastened to relieve it.

"I reproach myself bitterly for having placed you in this situation," she said; "but I could not help it, and will free you from my presence the moment I can do so with safety. When I bade you farewell, I meant it to be for ever, and persuaded myself I could adhere to my resolution. But I was deceived. You would pity me were I to tell you the anguish I endured. I could not accompany my poor father

in his rambles; and if I went forth at all, my steps involuntarily led me to Wood Street. At last, I resolved to disguise myself, and borrowed this suit from a Jew clothesman, who has a stall in Saint Paul's. Thus equipped, I paced backwards and forwards before the house, in the hope of obtaining a glimpse of you, and fortune has favoured me more than I expected, though it has led to this unhappy result. Heaven only knows what will become of me!" she added, bursting into tears. "Oh! that the pestilence would select me as one of its victims. But, like your own sex, it shuns all those who court it."

"I can neither advise you," replied Leonard, in a sombre tone, "nor help you. Ha!" he exclaimed, as the sound of violent blows were heard against the door below,—"your persecutors are trying to break into the house."

Rushing to the window, and gazing downwards, he perceived Sir Paul Parravicin and Pillichody battering against the shop door, and endeavouring to burst it open. It was, however, so stoutly barricaded that it resisted all their efforts.

"What is to be done?" cried Leonard. "The

noise will certainly alarm my master, and you will be discovered."

"Heed me not," rejoined Nizza, distractedly, "you shall not run any risk on my account. Let me down by the pulley. Deliver me to them. Anything is better than that you should suffer by my indiscretion."

"No, no," replied Leonard; "Mr. Blouudel shall know all. His love for his own daughter will make him feel for you. But come what will, I will not abandon you."

As he spoke, a timid knock was heard at the door, and a voice without exclaimed, in accents of the utmost trepidation, "Are you there, Leonard? — Robbers are breaking into the house. We shall all be murdered."

"Come in, Blaize," rejoined Leonard, opening the door and admitting the porter —"you may be of some assistance to me."

"In what way?" demanded Blaize.—"Ah! who's this?" he added, perceiving Nizza — "what is this page doing here?"

"Do not concern yourself about him, but attend to me," replied Leonard. "I am about to drive away those persons from the door.

You must lower me down in the basket attached to the pulley."

"And will you dare to engage them?" asked Blaize, peeping out at the shutter. "They are armed. As I live, one is Major Pillichody, the rascal who dared to make love to Patience. I have half a mind to go down with you, and give him a sound drubbing."

"You shall not encounter this danger for me," interposed Nizza, endeavouring to stay Leonard, who, having thrust a sword into his girdle, was about to pass through the window.

"Do not hinder me," replied the apprentice, breaking from her. "Take hold of the rope, Blaize, and mind it does not run down too quickly."

With this, he got into the basket, and as the porter carefully obeyed his instructions, he reached the ground in safety. On seeing him, Pillichody bolted across the street, and flourishing his sword, and uttering tremendous imprecations, held himself in readiness to beat an immediate retreat. Not so Parravicin. Instantly assailing the apprentice, he slightly wounded him in the arm. Seeing how mat-

ters stood, and that victory was pretty certain to declare itself for his patron, Pillichody returned, and, attacking the apprentice, by their combined efforts he was speedily disarmed. Pillichody would have passed his sword through Leonard's body, but the Knight stayed his hand.

"The fool has placed himself in our power," he said; "and he shall pay for his temerity. Nevertheless, I will spare his life, provided he assist us to get into the house, or will deliver up Nizza Macascree."

"I will do neither," replied Leonard, fiercely.

Parravicin raised his sword, and was about to strike, when, at the moment, the basket was again quickly lowered to the ground. It bore Nizza Macascree, who, rushing between them, arrested the stroke.

"Oh! why have you done this?" cried Leonard, in a tone of reproach.

"I will tell you why," rejoined Parravicin, triumphantly; "because she saw you were unable to defend her, and like a true woman surrendered herself to the victor. Take care of him, Pillichody, while I secure the girl. Spit him, if he attempts to stir."

And twining his arms round Nizza, notwithstanding her shrieks and resistance, he bore her away. Infuriated by the sight, Leonard Holt threw himself upon Pillichody, and a desperate struggle took place between them, which terminated this time successfully for the apprentice. Wresting his long rapier from the bully, Leonard rushed after Parravicin, and reached the end of Wood Street just in time to see him spring into a coach, and drive off with his prize. Speeding after them along Blowbladder Street and Middle Row, as Newgate Street was then termed, the apprentice shouted to the coachman to stop, but no attention being paid to his vociferations, and finding pursuit unavailing, he came to a halt. He then more slowly retraced his steps, and on arriving at the grocer's residence, found the basket drawn up. Almost afraid to call out, he at length mustered courage enough to shout to Blaize to lower it, and was answered by Mr. Bloundel, who, putting his head through the window, demanded in a stern tone why he had left the house?

Leonard briefly explained.

"I deeply regret your imprudence," replied

his master; "because I can now no more admit you. It is my fixed determination, as you well know, not to suffer any member of my family who may quit my house, to enter it again."

"I shall not attempt to remonstrate with you, sir," replied Leonard. "All I pray of you is to allow me to occupy this hutch, and to act as your porter."

"Willingly," rejoined Mr. Bloundel; "and as you have had the plague, you will run no risk of infection. You shall know all that passes within-doors, and I only lament that you should have banished yourself from the asylum which I hoped to afford you."

After some further conversation between them, a bundle was lowered by the grocer, containing a change of clothes and a couple of blankets. On receiving these, Leonard retired to the hutch, and tying a handkerchief round his wounded arm, wrapped himself in a night-rail, and stretching himself on the ground, in spite of his anxiety, soon sank asleep. He awoke about four o'clock in the morning, with a painful consciousness of what had taken place during the night. It was just beginning to grow light, and he walked across the street to

gaze at the house from which he was exiled. Its melancholy uninhabited look did not serve to cheer him. It seemed totally altered since he knew it first. The sign, which then invited the passers-by to enter the shop and deal with its honest owner, now appeared no longer significant, unless — and it will be remembered it was the Noah's Ark — it could be supposed to have reference to those shut up within. The apprentice looked at the habitation with misgiving, and, instead of regarding it as a sanctuary from the pestilence, could not help picturing it as a living tomb. The last conversation he had had with Amabel also arose forcibly to his recollection, and the little likelihood there appeared of seeing her again gave him acute agony. Oppressed by this painful idea, and unable to exclude from his thoughts the unhappy situation of Nizza Macascree, he bent his steps, scarcely knowing whither he was going, towards Saint Paul's.

Having passed so much of his time of late in the cathedral, Leonard began to regard it as a sort of home, and it now appeared like a place of refuge to him. Proceeding to the great western entrance, he seated himself on

one of the large blocks of stone left there by the masons occupied in repairing the exterior of the fane. His eye rested upon the mighty edifice before him, and the clear sparkling light revealed numberless points of architectural grandeur and beauty which he had never before noticed. The enormous buttresses and lofty pinnacles of the central tower were tinged with the beams of the rising sun, and glowed as if built of porphyry. While gazing at the summit of this tower, and calling to mind the magnificent view he had recently witnessed from it at the same hour, if a wish could have transported him thither at that moment, he would have enjoyed it again. But as this could not be, he tried to summon before his mental vision the whole glorious prospect — the broad and shining river, with its moving or motionless craft, — the gardens, the noble mansions, the warehouses, and mighty wharfs on its banks, — London bridge, with its enormous pile of habitations, — the old and picturesque city, with its innumerable towers and spires and girdle of grey walls, — the green fields and winding lanes leading to the lovely hills around it: — all these objects arose obedient to his fancy, and came

arrayed in colouring as fresh as that wherein they had before appeared to him. While thus occupied, his gaze remained riveted on the summit of the central tower, and he fancied he perceived some one leaning over the balustrade, but as little beyond the upper part of the figure could be discerned, and as it appeared perfectly motionless, he could not be quite sure that his eyes did not deceive him. Having gazed at the object for some minutes, during which it maintained the same attitude, he continued his survey of the pile, and became so excited by the sublime emotions inspired by the contemplation as to be insensible to aught else.

After awhile, he arose, and was about to proceed towards the portico, when chancing to look at the top of the tower, he remarked that the figure had disappeared, and while wondering who it could be, he perceived a person emerge from one of the tall windows in the lower part of the tower. It was Solomon Eagle, and he no longer wondered at what he had seen. The enthusiast was without his brazier, but carried a long stout staff. He ran along the pointed roof of the nave with inconceivable swiftness, till, reaching the vast stone cross, upwards of

twelve feet in height, ornamenting the western extremity, he climbed its base, and clasping the transverse bar of the sacred symbol of his faith with his left arm, extended his staff with his right, and described a circle, as if pointing out the walls of the city. He then raised his staff towards heaven, to invoke its vengeance, and anon pointed it menacingly downwards. After this, he broke into loud denunciations; but though the apprentice could not hear the words, he gathered their purport from his gestures.

By this time, a few masons had assembled, and, producing their implements, commenced working at the blocks of stone. Glancing at the enthusiast, one of them observed with a smile to his companion, "There is Solomon Eagle pronouncing his morning curse upon the city. I wonder whether the judgments he utters against it will come to pass."

"Assuredly, Phil Gatford," replied the other mason, gravely; "and I look upon all the work we are now doing as labour thrown away. Was he not right about the plague? Did he not foretel the devouring scourge by which we

are visited? And he will be right also about the fire. Since he has doomed it, this cathedral will be consumed by flames, and one stone will not be left standing on another."

"It is strange, Ned Turgis," observed Gatford," that, though Solomon Eagle may always be seen at daybreak at the top of the tower, or on the roof of the cathedral — sometimes at one point and sometimes at another,— no one can tell where he hides himself at other times. He no longer roams the streets at night, but you may remember when the officers of justice were in search of him, to give evidence against Mother Malmayns and Chowles, he was not to be found."

"I remember it," replied Turgis; "but I have no doubt he was hidden in some out-of-the-way corner of the cathedral — perhaps among the immense wooden beams of the clerestory."

"Or in some of the secret passages or cells contrived in the thickness of the walls," rejoined the first speaker.—"I say, Ned Turgis, if the plague increases, as there is every likelihood it will, Solomon Eagle will be the only preacher

left in Saint Paul's. Neither dean, prebends, minor-canons, nor vicars will attend. As it is, they have almost abandoned it."

"Shame on them!" exclaimed Leonard Holt, who being much interested in the conversation of the masons, had silently approached them. "At this season, more than ever, they are bound to attend to their duty."

"Why, so I think," rejoined Gatford; "but I suppose they consider self-preservation their first duty. They aver that all assemblages, whether called together for religious purposes or not, are dangerous, and likely to extend the pestilence."

"And yet crowds are permitted to assemble for purposes of amusement, if not for worship, in those holy walls," returned Leonard.

"Not so," replied Gatford. "Very few persons now come there, and none for amusement. Paul's Walk is completely deserted. The shops and stalls have been removed, and the pillars to which they were attached are restored to their former appearance."

"I am glad to hear it," rejoined Leonard. "I would far rather the sacred edifice were

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Edward Bolt conversing with the Masons before the Portico of Saint Pauls.

altogether abandoned than be what it has been of late,—a den of thieves."

"It was a stable and a magazine of arms in the time of the Commonwealth," remarked Gatford.

"And if Solomon Eagle's forebodings come to pass, it will be a heap of ruins in our own time," rejoined Turgis. "But I see the prophet of ill has quitted his post, and retired to his hiding-place."

Looking up as this was said, Leonard saw that the enthusiast had disappeared. At this moment, the great door of the cathedral was thrown open, and, quitting the masons, he ascended the broad steps under the portico, and entered the fane, where he found that the information he had received was correct, and that the stalls and other disfigurements to the pillars had been removed. After pacing the solitary aisles for some time, he made inquiries from the verger concerning Solomon Eagle.

"I know nothing about him," replied the man, reluctantly. "I believe he always appears at day-break on some part of the roof, but I

am as ignorant as yourself where he hides himself. The door of the winding staircase leading to the central tower is open. You can ascend it, and search for him, if you think proper."

Acting upon the suggestion, Leonard mounted to the belfry, and from thence to the summit of the tower. Having indulged himself with a brief survey of the glorious view around, he descended, and glanced into every cell and chamber as he passed, in the hopes of meeting with the enthusiast, but he was disappointed. At length, as he got about half way down, he felt his arm forcibly grasped, and instantly conjecturing who it was, offered no resistance. Without uttering a word, the person who had seized him dragged him up a few steps, pushed aside a secret door which closed behind them with a hollow clangour; and leading him along a dark narrow passage opened another door, and they emerged upon the roof. He then found that his suspicion was correct, and that his mysterious guide was no other than Solomon Eagle.

"I am glad to find you have recovered from the pestilence," said the enthusiast, regarding

him with a friendly glance,—"it proves you are favoured by heaven. I saw you in the open space before the cathedral this morning, and instantly recognized you. I was in the belfry when you descended, but you did not perceive me, and I wished to be certain you were alone before I discovered myself."

"You have ceased to roam the streets at night, and rouse the slumbering citizens to repentance?" asked Leonard.

"For the present I have," returned Solomon Eagle. "But I shall appear again when I am required. But you shall now learn why I have brought you hither. Look along those streets," he added, pointing to the thoroughfares opening in different directions. "What see you?"

"I see men piling heaps of wood and coals at certain distances, as if they were preparing bonfires," replied Leonard. "And yet it cannot be. This is no season for rejoicing."

"It has been supposed that the lighting of many thousand fires at once will purify the air," replied Solomon Eagle, "and therefore the Lord Mayor has given orders that heaps of fuel shall be placed before every house in every

street in the city, and that all these heaps shall be kindled at a certain hour. But it will be of no avail. The weather is now fine and settled, and the sky cloudless. But the offended Deity will cause the heaviest rain to descend, and extinguish their fires. No; the way to avert the pestilence is not by fire, but by prayer and penitence, by humiliation and fasting. Let this sinful people put on sackcloth and ashes. Let them beseech God by constant prayer to forgive them, and they may prevail, but not otherwise."

"And when are these fires to be lighted?" asked the apprentice.

"To-night, at midnight," replied Solomon Eagle.

He then took Leonard by the hand, and led him back the same way he had brought him. On reaching the spiral staircase, he said, "If you desire to behold a sight such as man has seldom witnessed, ascend to the summit of this tower an hour after midnight, when all these fires are lighted. A small door on the left of the northern entrance shall be left open. It will conduct you to the back of the choir, and

you must then find your way hither as well as you can."

Murmuring his thanks, Leonard hurried down the spiral staircase, and quitting the cathedral, proceeded in the direction of Wood Street. Preparations were everywhere making for carrying the Lord Mayor's orders into effect; and such was the beneficial result anticipated, that a general liveliness prevailed. On reaching his master's residence, he found him at the shutter, curious to know what was going forward; and having informed him, the grocer immediately threw him down money to procure wood and coal.

"I have but little faith in the experiment," he said, "but the Lord Mayor's injunctions must be obeyed."

With the help of Dallison, who had now arrived, Leonard Holt soon procured a large heap of fuel, and placed it in the middle of the street. The day was passed in executing other commissions for the grocer, and he took his meals in the hutch with the porter. Time appeared to pass with unusual slowness, and not he alone, but anxious thousands, awaited

the signal to kindle their fires. The night was profoundly dark and sultry, and Leonard could not help thinking that the enthusiast's prediction would be verified, and that rain would fall. But these gloomy anticipations vanished as the hour of midnight was tolled forth by the neighbouring clocks of Saint Michael's and Saint Alban's. Scarcely had the strokes died away, when Leonard seized a light, and set fire to the pile. Ten thousand other piles were kindled at the same moment, and in an instant the pitchy darkness was converted into light as bright as that of noonday.

Anxious to behold this prodigious illumination at its best, Leonard Holt committed the replenishing of the pile and the custody of the house to Dallison, and hastened to Saint Paul's. A great fire was burning at each angle of the cathedral, but without pausing to notice the effect of the flames upon the walls of the building, he passed through the door to which he had been directed, and hastening to the spiral staircase beyond the choir, ascended it with swift steps. He did not pause till he reached the summit of the tower, and there, indeed, a wondrous spectacle awaited him. The whole

city seemed on fire, and girded with a flaming belt —for piles were lighted at certain distances along the whole line of walls. The groups of dark figures collected round the fires added to their picturesque effect; and the course of every street could be traced by the reflection of the flames on the walls and gables of the houses. London Bridge was discernible from the fires burning upon it—and even upon the river brasiers were lighted on all the larger craft, which cast a ruddy glow upon the stream.

After gazing at this extraordinary sight for some time, Leonard began to descend. As yet he had seen nothing of Solomon Eagle, and searching for him in vain in the belfry, he quitted the cathedral. From a knot of persons gathered round one of the fires, he learnt that the enthusiast was addressing the crowd at the west side of the building, and proceeding thither, he perceived him standing on the edge of the balustrade of the south-western tower, surmounting the little church of Saint Gregory. His brasier was placed on one of the buttresses, and threw its light on the mighty central tower of the fabric, and on a large clock face immediately beneath. Solo-

mon Eagle was evidently denouncing the city, but his words were lost in the distance. As he proceeded, a loud clap of thunder pealed overhead.

"It comes — it comes!" cried the enthusiast, in a voice that could be distinctly heard in the death-like stillness that followed the thunder. "The wrath of heaven is at hand."

As he spoke, a bright flash cut the air, and a bolt struck down one of the pinnacles of the great tower. Flash after flash followed in quick succession, and the enthusiast, who seemed wrapped in flame, extended his arms towards heaven, as if beseeching a further display of its vengeance. Suddenly, the lightning ceased to flash and the thunder to roll. A few heavy drops of rain fell. These were succeeded by a deluging shower of such violence, that in less than a quarter of an hour every fire within the city was extinguished, and all was darkness and despair.

The deepest gloom and despondency prevailed that night throughout London. The sudden storm was regarded as a manifestation of the displeasure of Heaven, and as an intimation that the arrows of its wrath were not to be turned

aside by any human efforts. So impressed were all with this feeling, that when, in less than half an hour, the rain entirely ceased, the clouds cleared off, and the stars again poured down their lustre, no one attempted to re-light the quenched embers, fearing to provoke the divine vengeance. Nor was a monitor wanting to enforce the awful lesson. Solomon Eagle, with his brasier on his head, ran through the streets, calling on the inhabitants to take to heart what had happened, to repent, and prepare for their doom.

"The Lord will not spare you," he cried, as he stationed himself in the open space before Saint Stephen's, Walbrook. "He will visit your sins upon you. Pray, therefore, that ye may not be destroyed, both soul and body. Little time is allowed you for repentance. Many that hear me shall not live till to-morrow: few shall survive the year!"

"Thou, thyself, shalt not survive the night, false prophet," cried a voice from a neighbouring window. And immediately afterwards, the barrel of a gun was thrust forth, and a shot fired at the enthusiast. But, though Solomon Eagle never altered his position, he was wholly

uninjured, — the ball striking a bystander, who fell to the ground, mortally wounded.

"You have shot your own son, Mr. Westwood," cried one of the spectators, rushing up to the fallen man. "Who will henceforth doubt that Solomon Eagle is under the care of a special providence?"

"Not I," replied another spectator. "I shall never disregard his words in future."

Setting down his brasier, the enthusiast bent over the dead man,— for dead he was — and noted the placid smile upon his features. By this time, the unfortunate father had joined the group, and, on seeing the body of his son, wrung his hands in a pitiable manner, and gave utterance to the wildest expression of despair. No one attempted to seize him, till at length Solomon Eagle, rising from his kneeling posture, laid his hand upon his arm, and regarding him sternly, said, "What wrong had I done you, that you should seek to slay me?"

"What wrong?" rejoined Westwood — "such wrong as can never be repaired. Your fearful prophecies and denunciations so terrified my daughter, that she died distracted. My broken-hearted wife was not long in following

her; and now you have made me the murderer of my son. Complete the tragedy, and take my life."

"I have no desire to do so," replied Solomon Eagle, in a tone of commiseration. "My wish is to save your soul, and the souls of all who listen to me. I wonder not that your anger was at first stirred against me; but if your heart had been properly directed, indignation would have soon given way to better feelings. My mission is not to terrify, but to warn. Why will ye thus continue impenitent when ye are spoken to, not by my voice alone, but by a thousand others?—by the thunder—by the rain—by the pestilence!—and ye shall be spoken to, if ye continue senseless, by fire and by famine. Look at these quenched embers—at these flooded streets—they are types of your vain struggle with a superior power. Now, mark me what you must do to free the city from contagion. You must utterly and for ever abandon your evil courses. You must pray incessantly for remission of your sins. You must resign yourselves without repining to such chastisement as you have provoked, and must put your whole trust and confidence in

God. Do this, and do it heartily, it is possible that His wrath may be averted."

"I feel the force of your words," faltered Westwood, —"would I had felt it sooner!"

"Repentance never comes too late," rejoined the enthusiast. "Let this be an example to you all."

And snatching up his brasier, he continued his course at the same lightning speed as before. The unfortunate father was taken into his own dwelling, whither likewise the body of his son was conveyed. A strict watch was kept over him during the night, and in the morning he was removed to Newgate, where he perished in less than a week of the distemper.

The aspect of the streets on the following day was deplorable enough. Not that the weather was unfavourable. On the contrary, it was bright and sunny, while the heated atmosphere, cooled by the showers, felt no longer oppressive. But the sight of the half-burnt fires struck a chill into every bosom, and it was not until the heaps were removed that the more timorous ventured forth at all. The result, too, of the experiment was singularly unfortunate. Whether it was from the extraordinary heat

occasioned by the lighting of so many fires, or that the smoke did not ascend, and so kept down the pestilential effluvia, or that the number of persons who met together spread the contagion, certain it was that the pestilence was more widely extended than before, and the mortality fearfully increased.

On the commencement of the storm, Leonard Holt hurried back to Wood Street, and reached his master's dwelling just as the rain began to descend in torrents. Mr. Bloundel was at the window, and a few words only passed between him and the apprentice when the latter was compelled to take refuge in the hutch. Here he found Dallison the watchman, and they listened in awe-struck silence to the heavy showers, and to the hissing of the blazing embers in their struggle against the hostile element. By and by, the latter sound ceased. Not a light could be seen throughout the whole length of the street, nor was there any red reflection of the innumerable fires, as heretofore, in the sky. It was evident all were extinguished; and the pitiless pelting of the rain, the roar of the water-spouts, and the rush of the over-filled kennels, now converted into rivulets, could alone

be heard. After awhile, the storm cleared off, and Leonard and his companion issued from their retreat, and gazed in silence at the drenched heap before them While thus occupied, the window above them opened, and the grocer appeared at it.

"This is, indeed, a sad and striking lesson," he said, "and I hope will not be lost upon those who have witnessed it. It shows the utter impotency of a struggle against the Divine will, and that when man relies upon himself for preservation, he depends upon a broken reed. If I did not place myself under Heaven's protection, I should be sure that all my own precautions were unavailing I am now about to call up my family to prayer. You can join us in our supplications, and I trust they will not be unheard."

Closing the window, the grocer retired, and Leonard returned to the hutch, where he fell upon his knees, and as soon as he supposed that the family were gathered together, commenced his own prayers. He pictured the whole group assembled — the fervour of the grocer excited to an unwonted pitch by what had just occurred — the earnest countenances

of his wife and the younger children — and the exalted looks of Amabel. He could not see her — neither could he hear her voice — but he fancied how she looked, and in what terms she prayed — and it was no slight satisfaction to him to think that his own voice ascended to heaven coupled with hers.

On quitting the hutch, he found Dallison conversing with Doctor Hodges. The physician expressed great surprise at seeing him, and inquired how he came to have left his master's house. Leonard related all that had happened, and besought his assistance in Nizza's behalf.

"I will do all I can for her," replied Hodges, "for I feel greatly interested about her. But who is this Sir Paul Parravicin? I never heard of him."

"I know nothing more of him than what I have told you, sir," replied Leonard. "He is a friend of the Earl of Rochester."

"It must be a feigned name," rejoined Hodges; "but I will speedily find him out. You must lodge at my house to-night. It will be better for you than sleeping in that damp shed. But first, I must have a word or two with your master. I have been abroad

all night, and came hither to ascertain what he thought of this plan of the fires, and what he had done. How do you give the signal to him?"

"There is a cord within the hutch by which you can sound a bell within his chamber," returned Leonard; "I will ring it."

Accordingly, he did so, and the summons was almost instantly answered by the grocer. A kindly greeting passed between the latter and Hodges, who inquired whether all was going on satisfactorily within, and whether any thing could be done for the family.

"I would not have disturbed you at this unseasonable hour," he said, "but chancing to be in your neighbourhood, and thinking it likely you would be on the watch, I called to have a word with you. Though I could not foresee what would happen, I entirely disapproved of these fires as likely to increase rather than check the pestilence."

"The hand of heaven has extinguished them, because they were lighted in opposition to its decrees," replied Bloundel; "but you have asked me whether all is going on well within. I should answer readily in the affirmative, but that my wife expresses much anxiety respecting

Amabel. We have no longer any apprehension of misconduct. She is all we could desire — serious and devout. But we have fears for her health. The confinement may be too much for her. What would you recommend?"

"I must see her to be able to speak confidently," replied Hodges.

"I know not how that can be accomplished, unless you choose to ascend by a basket attached to the pulley," replied the grocer with some hesitation — "and it is against my plan to admit you."

"But your daughter's life, my good friend," rejoined Hodges, "think of that. If I choose to risk life and limb to visit her, you may surely risk the chance of contagion to admit me. But you need have no fear. Sprinkle your room with spirits of sulphur, and place a phial of vinegar so that I can use it on my first entrance into the house, and I will answer for the safety of your family."

These preparations made, Mr. Bloundel lowered the basket into which Hodges got, and grasping the rope, not without some misgiving on his part, he was drawn up. Leonard witnessed his ascent with a beating heart,

and could scarcely repress a feeling of envy when he saw him pass through the window, and knew that he would soon be in the presence of Amabel. But this feeling quickly changed into one of deep anxiety concerning her. Her father's account of her had increased the uneasiness he previously felt, and he was as anxious to know the Doctor's opinion of her, as if his own fate had depended upon it. He was kept in this painful state of suspense for nearly an hour, when voices were heard at the window, and presently afterwards Hodges was carefully let down. Bidding the grocer farewell, he desired Leonard to follow him, and led the way towards Cheapside. They proceeded a short distance in silence, when the latter ventured to remark, "You say nothing about Amabel, sir? I fear you found her seriously indisposed."

"Do not question me about her just now," rejoined the Doctor, in a subdued emotion. "I would rather not discuss the subject."

Nothing more was said, for though the apprentice would willingly have continued the conversation, his companion's evident disinclination to pursue it compelled him to desist. In this way, they reached the Doctor's resi-

dence, where Leonard was immediately shown to a comfortable bed.

It was late when he awoke next day, and as the Doctor was gone forth, he partook of a plentiful breakfast which was placed before him, and repaired to Wood Street, but his master having no commissions for him to execute, he went back again. By this time, Doctor Hodges had returned, and calling him into his library, told him he wished to speak with him.

"You were right last night," he said, "in construing my silence into alarm for Amabel. In truth, I fear she is rapidly sinking into a decline, and nothing will arrest the progress of the insidious disease but instant removal to the country. To this she will not consent, neither do I know how it could be accomplished. It is pitiable to see so lovely a creature dying, as I fear she is, of a broken heart."

Leonard covered his face with his hands, and wept aloud.

"We have not yet spoken of Nizza Macascree," said Hodges, after a pause, tapping him kindly on the shoulder. "I think I have discovered a trace of her."

"I am glad to hear it," replied Leonard,

rousing himself. "She is another victim of these profligates. But I will be revenged upon them all."

"I have before enjoined you to restrain your indignation, just though it be," returned Hodges. "I have not yet found out whither she has been taken, but I have a clue which, unless I am mistaken, will lead me to it. But I must now dismiss you. I have other affairs to attend to, and must give a dangerous and difficult case on which I have been consulted, undisturbed consideration. Make my house your home as long as you think proper."

Warmly thanking the Doctor, Leonard then withdrew. Shortly after this, he walked forth, and ascertaining that he was not required by his master, determined to satisfy himself by actual observation of the extent of the ravages of the plague.

With this view, he shaped his course along Lad Lane, and traversing Cateaton Street, entered Lothbury. The number of houses which he here found closed, with red crosses on the doors, and the fatal inscription above them, convinced him that the deplorable accounts he had heard were not exaggerated. In passing

some of these habitations, he saw such ghastly faces at the windows, and heard such lamentable cries, that he was glad to hurry on and get out of sight and hearing. In Throgmorton Street, nearly opposite Draper's Hall, a poor wretch suddenly opened a casement, and before his attendants could force him back, threw himself from a great height to the ground, and broke his neck. Another incident, of an equally distressing nature, occurred. A young and richly dressed man issued from a tavern in Broad Street, and with a wild and inflamed countenance staggered along. He addressed some insulting language to Leonard, but the latter, who desired no quarrel, disregarded his remarks and let him pass. The next person encountered by the drunken man was a young female. Suddenly catching her in his arms, he imprinted a kiss upon her lips, and then, with a frightful laugh, shouted, "I have given you the plague! Look here!" And tearing aside the collar of his shirt, he exhibited a large tumour. The young woman uttered a shriek of terror and fainted, while her ruthless assailant took to his heels, and running as long as his strength lasted, fell down, and was taken

to the pest-house, where he was joined that same night by his victim. And this was by no means an uncommon occurrence. The distemper acted differently on different temperaments. Some it inflamed to an ungovernable pitch of madness — others it reduced to the depths of despair — while in many cases it brought out and aggravated the worst parts of the character. Wives conveyed the infection intentionally to their husbands — husbands to their wives — parents to their children — lovers to the objects of their affection — while, as in the case above-mentioned, many persons ran about like rabid hounds, striving to communicate it to all they met. Greatly shocked by what had occurred, and yet not altogether surprised at it, for his mind had become familiarised with horrors, Leonard struck down Finch Lane, and proceeded towards Cornhill. On the way, he noticed two dead bodies lying at the mouth of a small alley, and hastening past was stopped at the entrance to Cornhill, by a butcher's apprentice, who was wheeling away the body of an old man, who had just died while purchasing meat at a stall at Stock's Market. Filled with unutterable loathing at

this miserable spectacle, Leonard was fain to procure a glass of canary to recruit his spirits.

Accordingly, he proceeded to the Globe tavern, at the corner of Birchin Lane. As he entered the house, a lively strain of music caught his ear, and glancing in the direction of the sound, he found it proceeded from the blind piper, Mike Macascree, who was playing to some half-dozen roystering youths. Bell lay at her master's feet, and as Leonard approached the party, she pricked up her ears, and being called by name, instantly sprang towards him, and manifested the strongest delight. The piper stopped playing to listen to what was going forward, but the young men urged him to proceed, and again filled his glass.

"Don't drink any more, Mike," said Leonard, "but step aside with me. I've something to say to you — something about your daughter."

"My daughter!" exclaimed the piper, in a half-angry, half-sorrowful voice, while a slight moisture forced itself through his orbless lids — "I don't want to hear anything about her, except that she is dead. She has deserted me, and disgraced herself."

"You are mistaken," rejoined Leonard; "and if you will come with me, I will explain the truth to you."

"I will listen to no explanation," rejoined the piper, furiously — "she has given me pain enough already. I 'm engaged with this jovial company. Fill my glass, my masters — there, fill it again," he added, draining it eagerly, and with the evident wish to drown all thought. "There, now you shall have such a tune as was never listened to by mortal ears."

A loud laugh from the young men followed this proposition, and the piper played away so furiously that it added to their merriment. Touched with compassion, Leonard walked aside, hoping, when the party broke up, to be able to have a word with the poor man. But the piper's excitement increased. He played faster and drank harder, until it was evident he was no longer in a condition to speak rationally. Leonard, therefore, addressed himself to the drawer, and desired him to look after the piper, engaging to return before midnight to see how he went on. The drawer promising compliance, Leonard departed; and not feeling

disposed to continue his walk, returned to Wood Street.

Nothing particular occurred during the evening. Leonard did not see Doctor Hodges, who was engaged in his professional duties; and after keeping watch before the grocer's till nearly midnight, he again retraced his steps to the Globe. The drawer was at the door, and about to close the house.

"You will be sorry to learn the fate of the poor piper," he said.

"Why, what has happened to him?" cried Leonard.

"He is dead of the plague," was the reply.

"What, so suddenly!" exclaimed the apprentice. "You are jesting with me."

"Alas! it is no jest," rejoined the drawer, in a tone that convinced the apprentice of his sincerity. "His entertainers quitted him about two hours ago, and, in spite of my efforts to detain him, he left the house and sat down on those steps. Concluding he would fall asleep, I did not disturb him, and his dog kept careful watch over him. I forgot all about him till a short time ago, when hearing the pest-cart

pass, I went forth, and learnt that the drivers having found him dead, as they supposed, of the pestilence, had placed their forks under his belt and thrown him upon the other bodies."

"And where is the dog?" cried Leonard.

"She would not quit her master," replied the drawer, "so the men threw her into the cart with him, saying, they would bury her in the plague-pit, as all dogs were ordered to be destroyed."

"This must be prevented," cried Leonard. "Which way did the dead-cart go?"

"Towards Moorgate," replied the drawer.

Leonard heard no more, but dashing through a narrow passage opposite the Conduit, crossed Bartholomew Lane, and traversing Lothbury, soon reached Coleman Street and the old city gate, to which he had been directed. Here he learnt that the dead-cart had passed through it about five minutes before, and he hurried on towards Finsbury fields. He had not proceeded far when he heard a sound as of a pipe at a distance, furiously played, and accompanied by the barking of a dog. These sounds were followed by cries of alarm, and he presently perceived two persons running towards him, with

a swiftness which could only be occasioned by terror. One of them carried a lantern, and grasping his arm, the apprentice detained him.

"What is the matter?" he asked.

"The devil 's the matter," replied the man— "the piper's ghost has appeared in that cart, and is playing his old tunes again."

"Ay, it 's either his spirit, or he is come to life again," observed the other man, stopping likewise. "I tossed him into the cart myself, and will swear he was dead enough then."

"You have committed a dreadful mistake," cried Leonard. "You have tossed a living man into the cart, instead of a dead one. Do you not hear those sounds?" And as he spoke, the notes of the pipe swelled to a louder strain than ever.

"I tell you it is the devil — or a ghost," replied the driver, — "I will stay here no longer."

"Lend me your lantern, and I will go to the cart," rejoined Leonard.

"Take it," replied the man, "but I caution you to stay where you are. You may receive a shock you will never survive."

Paying no attention to what was said, Leonard ran towards the cart, and found the piper seated upon a pile of dead bodies, most of them stripped of their covering, with Bell by his side, and playing away at a prodigious rate.

CHAPTER III.

THE DANCE OF DEATH.

The condition of the prisons at this season was really frightful. In Newgate, in particular, where the distemper broke out at the beginning of June, it raged with such violence that in less than a week more than half the prisoners were swept off, and it appeared probable, that, unless its fury abated, not a soul would be left alive within it. At all times, this crowded and ill-kept prison was infested by the gaol-fever and other pestilential disorders, but these were mild in comparison with the present terrible visitation. The atmosphere was noisome and malignant; the wards were never cleansed; and many poor wretches who died in their cells, were left there till the attendants on the dead-cart chose to drag them forth. No restraint being placed upon the sick, and the

rules of the prison allowing them the free use of any strong liquors they could purchase, the scenes that occurred were too dreadful and revolting for description, and could only be paralleled by the orgies of a pandemonium. Many reckless beings, conscious that they were attacked by a fatal disorder, drank as long as they could raise the cup to their lips, and after committing the wildest and most shocking extravagances, died in a state of frenzy.

Newgate became thus, as it were, the very focus of infection, where the plague assumed its worst aspect, and where its victims perished far more expeditiously than elsewhere. Two of the turnkeys had already died of the distemper, and such was the alarm entertained that no other persons could be found to supply their places. To penetrate the recesses of the prison, was almost to ensure destruction, and none but the attendants of the dead-cart and the nurses attempted it. Among the latter was Judith. Employed as a nurse on the first outbreak of the plague, she willingly and fearlessly undertook the office. The worse the disease became, the better pleased she appeared; and she was so utterly without apprehension, that when no one

would approach the cell where some wretched sufferer lay expiring, she unhesitatingly entered it. But it was not to render aid, but to plunder, that she thus exercised her functions. She administered no medicine, dressed no tumours, and did not contribute in the slightest degree to the comfort of the miserable wretches committed to her charge. All she desired was to obtain whatever valuables they possessed, or to wring from them any secret that might afterwards be turned to account. Foreseeing that Newgate must ere long be depopulated, and having no fears for herself, she knew that she must then be liberated, and be able once more to renew her mischievous practices upon mankind. Her marvellous preservation throughout all the dangers to which she was exposed seemed almost to warrant the supposition that she had entered into a compact with the pestilence, to extend its ravages by every means in her power, on the condition of being spared herself.

Soon after the outbreak of the plague in Newgate, all the debtors were liberated, and if the keepers had had their own way, the common felons would have been likewise released. But this could not be, and they were kept to

perish as before described. Matters, however, grew so serious, that it became a question whether the few miserable wretches left alive ought to be longer detained, and at last the turnkeys refusing to act any longer, and delivering their keys to the governor, the whole of the prisoners were set free.

On the night of their liberation, Chowles and Judith proceeded to the vaults of Saint Faith's, to deposit within them the plunder they had obtained in the prison. They found them entirely deserted. Neither verger, sexton, nor any other person, was to be seen, and they took up their quarters in the crypt. Having brought a basket of provisions and a few bottles of wine with them, they determined to pass the night in revelry; and accordingly, having lighted a fire with the fragments of old coffins brought from the charnel, they sat down to their meal. Having done full justice to it, and disposed of the first flask, they were about to abandon themselves to unrestrained enjoyment, when their glee was all at once interrupted by a strange and unaccountable noise in the adjoining church. Chowles, who had just commenced chanting one of his wild melodies, suddenly stopped, and

Judith set down the glass she had raised to her lips, untasted. What could it mean? Neither of them could tell. It seemed like strains of unearthly music, mixed with shrieks and groans as of tortured spirits, accompanied by peals of such laughter as might be supposed to proceed from demons.

"The dead are burst forth from their tombs," cried Chowles, in a quavering voice, "and are attended by a legion of evil spirits."

"It would seem so," replied Judith, rising. "I should like to behold the sight. Come with me."

"Not for the world!" rejoined Chowles, shuddering, "and I would recommend you to stay where you are. You may behold your dead husband among them."

"Do you think so?" rejoined Judith, halting.

"I am sure of it," cried Chowles, eagerly. "Stay where you are — stay where you are."

As he spoke, there was another peal of infernal laughter, and the strains of music grew louder each moment.

"Come what may, I will see what it is," said Judith, emptying her glass, as if seeking courage

from the draught. "Surely," she added, in a taunting tone, "you will come with me."

"I am afraid of nothing earthly," rejoined Chowles — "but I do not like to face beings of another world."

"Then I will go alone," rejoined Judith.

"Nay, that shall never be," replied Chowles, tottering after her.

As they opened the door and crossed the charnel, such an extraordinary combination of sounds burst upon their ears that they again paused, and looked anxiously at each other. Chowles laid his hand on his companion's arm, and strove to detain her, but she would not be stayed, and he was forced to proceed. Setting down the lamp on the stone floor, Judith passed into the subterranean church, where she beheld a sight that almost petrified her. In the midst of the nave, which was illumined by a blue glimmering light, whence proceeding it was impossible to determine, stood a number of grotesque figures, apparelled in fantastic garbs, and each attended by a skeleton. Some of the latter grisly shapes were playing on tambours, others on psalteries, others on rebecs — every instrument producing the strangest sound ima-

ginable. Viewed through the massive pillars, beneath that dark and ponderous roof, and by the mystic light before described, this strange company had a supernatural appearance, and neither Chowles nor Judith doubted for a moment that they beheld before them a congregation of phantoms. An irresistible feeling of curiosity prompted them to advance. On drawing nearer, they found the assemblage comprehended all ranks of society. There was a pope in his tiara and pontifical dress; a cardinal in his cap and robes; a monarch with a sceptre in his hand, and arrayed in the habiliments of royalty; a crowned queen; a bishop wearing his mitre, and carrying his crosier; an abbot likewise in his mitre, and bearing a crosier; a duke in his robes of state; a grave canon of the church; a knight sheathed in armour; a judge, an advocate, and a magistrate, all in their robes; a mendicant friar and a nun; and the list was completed by a physician, an astrologer, a miser, a merchant, a duchess, a pedlar, a soldier, a gamester, an idiot, a robber, a blind man, and a beggar, — each distinguishable by his apparel.

By and by, with a wild and gibbering laugh

that chilled the beholders' blood, one of the tallest and grisliest of the skeletons sprang forward, and beating his drum, the whole ghostly company formed, two and two, into a line—a skeleton placing itself on the right of every mortal. In this order, the fantastic procession marched between the pillars, the unearthly music playing all the while, and disappeared at the farther extremity of the church. With the last of the group, the mysterious light vanished, and Chowles and his companion were left in profound darkness.

"What can it mean?" cried Judith, as soon as she recovered her speech. "Are they human, or spirits?"

"Human beings don't generally amuse themselves in this way," returned Chowles. "But hark!—I still hear the music.—They are above—in Saint Paul's."

"Then I will join them," said Judith. "I am resolved to see the end of it."

"Don't leave me behind," returned Chowles, following her. "I would rather keep company with Beelzebub and all his imps than be alone."

Both were too well acquainted with the way to need any light. Ascending the broad stone

steps, they presently emerged into the cathedral, which they found illumined by the same glimmering light as the lower church, and they perceived the ghostly assemblage gathered into an immense ring, and dancing round the tall skeleton, who continued beating his drum and uttering a strange gibbering sound, which was echoed by the others. Each moment, the dancers increased the swiftness of their pace, until at last it grew to a giddy whirl, and then, all at once, with a shriek of laughter, the whole company fell to the ground.

Chowles and Judith, then, for the first time, understood, from the confusion that ensued and the exclamations uttered, that they were no spirits they had to deal with, but beings of the same mould as themselves. Accordingly, they approached the party of masquers, for such they proved, and found on inquiry that they were a party of young gallants, who, headed by the Earl of Rochester — the representative of the tall skeleton — had determined to realize the Dance of Death, as once depicted on the walls of an ancient cloister at the north of the cathedral, called Pardon Churchyard, on the walls of which, says Stowe, were " artificially

and richly painted the Dance of Macabre, or Dance of Death, commonly called the Dance of Paul's, the like whereof was painted about Saint Innocent's, at Paris. The metres or poesy of this dance," proceeds the same authority, " were translated out of French into English by John Lydgate, monk of Bury; and with the picture of Death leading all estates, painted about the cloister, at the special request and expense of Jenkin Carpenter, in the reign of Henry the Sixth." Pardon Churchyard was pulled down by the Protector Somerset, in the reign of Edward the Sixth, and the materials employed in the erection of his own palace in the Strand. It was the discussion of these singular paintings, and of the designs on the same subject ascribed to Holbein, that led the Earl of Rochester and his companions to propose the fantastic spectacle above described. With the disposition which this reckless nobleman possessed to turn the most solemn and appalling subjects to jest, he thought no season so fitting for such an entertainment as the present — just as in our own time the lively Parisians made the cholera, while raging in their city, the subject of a

carnival pastime. The exhibition witnessed by Chowles and Judith was a rehearsal of the masque intended to be represented in the cathedral on the following night.

Again marshalling his band, the Earl of Rochester beat his drum, and skipping before them, led the way towards the south door of the cathedral, which was thrown open by an unseen hand, and the procession glided through it like a troop of spectres. Chowles, whose appearance was not unlike that of an animated skeleton, was seized with a strange desire to join in what was going forward, and taking off his doublet and baring his bony arms and legs, he followed the others, dancing round Judith in the same manner that the other skeletons danced round their partners.

On reaching the Convocation House, a door was opened and the procession entered the cloisters; and here Chowles, dragging Judith into the area between him and the beautiful structure they surrounded, began a dance of so extraordinary a character that the whole troop collected round to witness it. Rochester beat his drum, and the other representatives of mortality who were provided with musical

instruments struck up a wild kind of accompaniment, to which Chowles executed the most grotesque flourishes. So wildly excited did he become, and such extravagances did he commit, that even Judith stared aghast at him, and began to think his wits were fled. Now he whirled round her — now sprang high into the air — now twined his lean arms round her waist — now peeped over one shoulder, now over the other — and at last griped her neck so forcibly that he might, perhaps, have strangled her, if she had not broken from him, and dealt him a severe blow that brought him senseless to the ground. On recovering, he found himself in the arched entrance of a large octagonal chamber, lighted at each side by a lofty pointed window filled with stained glass. Round this chamber ran a wide stone bench, with a richly carved back of the same material, on which the masquers were seated, and opposite the entrance was a raised seat ordinarily allotted to the dean, but now occupied by the Earl of Rochester. A circular oak table stood in the midst of the chamber covered with magnificent silver dishes heaped with the choicest viands, which were handed to the guests by the

by J. Franklin.

Earl's servants, all of whom represented skeletons, and it had a strange effect to behold these ghastly objects filling the cups of the revellers, bending obsequiously before some blooming dame, or crowding round their spectral-looking lord.

At first, Chowles was so confused that he thought he must have awakened in another world, but by degrees he called to mind what had occurred, and ascertained from Judith that he was in the Convocation House. Getting up, he joined the train of grisly attendants, and acquitted himself so well that the Earl engaged him as performer in the masque. He was furthermore informed that, in all probability, the King himself, with many of his favourite nobles, and the chief court beauties would be present to witness the spectacle.

The banquet over, word was brought that chairs and coaches were without, and the company departed, leaving behind only a few attendants, who remained to put matters in order.

While they were thus occupied, Judith, who had fixed her greedy eyes upon the plate, observed, in an under tone, to Chowles. "There

will be fine plunder for us. We must manage to carry off all that plate while they are engaged in the masque."

"You must do it yourself, then," returned Chowles, in the same tone — "for I shall have to play a principal part in the entertainment, and as the king himself will be present, I cannot give up such an opportunity of distinguishing myself."

"You can have no share in the prize, if you lend no assistance," replied Judith, with a dissatisfied look.

"Of course not," rejoined Chowles; "on this occasion it is all yours. The Dance of Death is too much to my taste to be given up."

Perceiving they were noticed, Chowles and Judith then left the Convocation House, and returned to the vault in Saint Faith's, nor did they emerge from it until late on the following day.

Some rumour of the masque having gone abroad, towards evening a crowd, chiefly composed of the most worthless order of society, collected under the portico at the western entrance, and the great doors being opened by

Chowles, they entered the cathedral. Thus was this sacred building once more invaded — once again a scene of noise, riot, and confusion — its vaulted roofs, instead of echoing the voice of prayer, or the choral hymn, resounded with loud laughter, imprecations, and licentious discourse. This disorder, however, was kept in some bounds by a strong body of the royal guard, who soon afterwards arrived, and stationing themselves in parties of three or four at each of the massive columns flanking the aisles, maintained some show of decorum. Besides these, there were others of the royal attendants bearing torches who walked from place to place, and compelled all loiterers in dark corners to proceed to the nave.

A little before midnight, the great doors were again thrown open, and a large troop of richly attired personages, all wearing masks, were admitted. For a short time, they paced to and fro between its shafted pillars gazing at the spectators grouped around, and evidently from their jests and laughter not a little entertained by the scene. As the clock struck twelve, however, all sounds were hushed, and the courtly party stationed themselves on the

steps leading to the choir. At the same moment, also, the torches were extinguished, and the whole of the building buried in profound darkness. Presently after, a sound was heard of footsteps approaching the nave, but nothing could be discerned. Expectation was kept on the rack for some minutes, during which many a stifled cry was heard from those whose courage failed them at this trying juncture. All at once, a blue light illumined the nave, and partially revealed the lofty pillars by which it was surrounded. By this light, the whole of the ghostly company could be seen drawn up near the western door. They were arranged two and two, a skeleton standing as before on the right of each character. The procession next marched slowly and silently towards the choir, and drew up at the foot of the steps, to give the royal party an opportunity of examining them. After pausing there for a few minutes, Rochester, in the dress of the larger skeleton, started off, and beating his drum was followed by the Pope and his attendant skeleton. This couple having danced together for some minutes to the infinite diversion of the spectators, disappeared behind

a pillar, and were succeeded by the monarch and a second skeleton. These, in their turn, gave way to the cardinal and his companion, and so on till the whole of the masquers had exhibited themselves, when at a signal from the Earl the party re-appeared, and formed a ring round him. The dance was executed with great spirit, and elicited tumultuous applause from all the beholders. The Earl now retired, and Chowles took his place. He was clothed in an elastic dress painted of a leaden and cadaverous colour which fitted closely to his fleshless figure, and defined all its angularities. He carried an hour-glass in one hand, and a dart in the other, and in the course of the dance kept continually pointing the latter at those who moved around him. His feats of the previous evening were nothing to his present achievements. His joints creaked, and his eyes flamed like burning coals. As he continued, his excitement increased. He bounded higher, and his countenance assumed so hideous an expression, that those near him recoiled in terror, crying, "Death himself had broke loose among them." The consternation soon became general. The masquers fled in dismay, and scam-

pered along the aisles scarcely knowing whither they were going. Delighted with the alarm he occasioned, Chowles chased a large party along the northern aisle, and was pursuing them across the transept upon which it opened, when he was arrested in his turn by another equally formidable figure, who suddenly placed himself in his path.

"Hold!" exclaimed Solomon Eagle, — for it was the enthusiast — in a voice of thunder, "it is time this scandalous exhibition should cease. Know all ye who make a mockery of death, that his power will be speedily and fearfully approved upon you. Think not to escape the vengeance of the Great Being whose temple you have profaned. And you, O King! who have sanctioned these evil doings by your presence, and who by your own dissolute life set a pernicious example to all your subjects, know that your city shall be utterly laid waste, first by plague, and then by fire. Tremble! my warning is as terrible and true as the handwriting on the wall."

"Who art thou who holdest this language towards me?" demanded Charles.

"I am called Solomon Eagle," replied the enthusiast, "and am charged with a mission from on high to warn your doomed people of their fate. Be warned yourself, sire. Your end will be sudden. You will be snatched away in the midst of your guilty pleasures, and with little time for repentance. Be warned, I say again."

With this, he turned to depart.

"Secure the knave," cried Charles, angrily. "He shall be soundly scourged for his insolence."

But bursting through the guard, Solomon Eagle ran swiftly up the choir and disappeared, nor could his pursuers discover any traces of him.

"Strange!" exclaimed the King, when he was told of the enthusiast's escape. "Let us go to supper. This masque has given me the vapours."

"Pray heaven it have not given us the plague," observed the fair Stewart, who stood beside him, taking his arm.

"It is to be hoped not," rejoined Charles; "but, odds fish! it is a most dismal affair."

"It is so, in more ways than one," replied Rochester, "for I have just learnt that all my best plate has been carried off from the Convocation House. I shall only be able to offer your Majesty and your fair partner a sorry supper."

CHAPTER IV.

THE PLAGUE-PIT.

On being made acquainted by Leonard, who helped him out of the pest-cart, with the danger he had run, the piper uttered a cry of terror, and swooned away. The buriers seeing how matters stood, and that their superstitious fears were altogether groundless, now returned, and one of them producing a phial of vinegar, sprinkled the fainting man with it, and speedily brought him to himself. But though so far recovered, his terror had by no means abated, and he declared his firm conviction that he was infected by the pestilence.

"I have been carried towards the plague-pit by mistake," he said. "I shall soon be conveyed thither in right earnest, and not have the power of frightening away my conductors on the road."

"Poh! poh!" cried one of the buriers, jestingly. "I hope you will often ride with us, and play us many a merry tune as you go. You shall always be welcome to a seat in the cart."

"Be of good cheer," added Leonard, "and all will be well. Come with me to an apothecary's shop, and I will procure a cordial for you which will speedily dispel your qualms."

The piper shook his head, and replied, with a deep groan, that he was certain all was over with him.

"However, I will not reject your kindness," he added, "though I feel I am past the help of medicine."

With this, he whistled to Bell, who was skipping about Leonard, having recognised him on his first approach, and they proceeded towards the second postern in London Wall, between Moorgate and Cripplegate; while the buriers, laughing heartily at the adventure, took their way towards the plague-pit and discharged their dreadful load within it.

Arrived in Basinghall Street, and looking around, Leonard soon discovered by the links at the door, as well as by the crowd collected

before it,—for day and night the apothecaries' dwellings were besieged by the sick,—the shop of which he was in search. It was long before they could obtain admittance, and during this time the piper said he felt himself getting rapidly worse, but imagining he was merely labouring under the effect of fright, Leonard paid little attention to his complaints. The apothecary, however, no sooner set eyes upon him than he pronounced him infected, and on examination, it proved that the fatal tokens had already appeared.

"I knew it was so," cried the piper. "Take me to the pest-house — take me to the pest-house!"

"His desire had better be complied with," observed the apothecary. "He is able to walk thither now, but I will not answer for his being able to do so two hours hence. It is a bad case," he added, in an under-tone, to Leonard.

Feeing the apothecary, Leonard set out with the piper, and passing through Cripplegate, they entered the open fields. Here they paused for a moment, and the little dog ran round and round them, barking gleefully.

"Poor Bell!" cried the piper; "what will become of thee when I am gone!"

"If you will intrust her to me, I will take care of her," replied Leonard.

"She is yours," rejoined the piper, in a voice hoarse with emotion. "Be kind to her for my sake, and for the sake of her unfortunate mistress."

"Since you have alluded to your daughter," returned Leonard; "I must tell you what has become of her. I have not hitherto mentioned the subject, fearing it might distress you."

"Have no further consideration, but speak out," rejoined the piper. "Be it what it may, I will bear it like a man."

Leonard then briefly recounted all that had occurred, describing Nizza's disguise as a page, and her forcible abduction by Parravicin. He was frequently interrupted by the groans of his hearer, who at last gave vent to his rage and anguish in words.

"Heaven's direst curse upon her ravisher!" he cried. "May he endure worse misery than I now endure! She is lost for ever."

"She may yet be preserved," rejoined Leo-

nard. "Doctor Hodges thinks he has discovered her retreat, and I will not rest till I find her."

"No — no, you will never find her," replied the piper bitterly; "or if you do, it will be only to bewail her ruin."

His rage then gave way to such an access of grief, that letting his head fall on Leonard's shoulder he wept aloud.

"There is a secret connected with that poor girl," he said, at length, controlling his emotion by a powerful effort, "which must now go to the grave with me. The knowledge of it would only add to her distress."

"You view the matter too unfavourably," replied Leonard; "and if the secret is of any moment, I entreat you to confide it to me. If your worst apprehensions should prove well-founded, I promise you it shall never be revealed to her."

"On that condition only, I will confide it to you," replied the piper; "but not now — not now — to-morrow morning, if I am alive."

"It may be out of your power then," returned Leonard. "For your daughter's sake I urge you not to delay."

"It is for her sake I am silent," rejoined the piper. "Come along—come along!" he added, hurrying forward. "Are we far from the pest-house? My strength is failing me."

On arriving at their destination, they were readily admitted to the asylum, but a slight difficulty arose, which, however, was speedily obviated. All the couches were filled, but on examining them it was found that one of the sick persons had just been released from his sufferings, and the body being removed, the piper was allowed to take its place. Leonard remained by him for a short time, but, overpowered by the pestilential effluvia and the sight of so many miserable objects, he was compelled to seek the open air. Returning, however, shortly afterwards, he found the piper in a very perturbed state. On hearing Leonard's voice he appeared greatly relieved, and, taking his gown from beneath his pillow, gave it to him, and desired him to unrip a part of the garment, in which it was evident something was sewn. The apprentice complied, and a small packet dropped forth.

"Take it," said the piper; "and if I die, — and Nizza should happily be preserved from

her ravisher, give it her. But not otherwise, —not otherwise. Implore her to forgive me — to pity me."

"Forgive you — her father!" cried Leonard, in astonishment.

"That packet will explain all," replied the piper, in a troubled tone. "You promised to take charge of poor Bell," he added, drawing forth the little animal, who had crept to the foot of the bed, "here she is. Farewell! my faithful friend," he added, pressing his rough lips to her forehead, while she whined piteously, as if beseeching him to allow her to remain; "farewell, for ever."

"Not for ever, I trust," replied Leonard, taking her gently from him.

"And now you had better go," said the piper. "Return, if you can, to-morrow."

"I will,—I will," replied Leonard. And he hurried out of the room.

He was followed to the door by a young chirurgeon, — the same who had accompanied Mr. Bloundel during his inspection of the pest-house, — and he inquired of him if he thought the piper's case utterly hopeless.

"Not utterly so," replied the young man.

"I shall be able to speak more positively in a few hours. At present, I think, with care and attention there *is* a chance of his recovery."

Much comforted by this assurance, Leonard departed, and afraid to put Bell to the ground lest she should run back to her master, he continued to carry her, and endeavoured to attach her to him by caresses and endearments. The little animal showed her sense of his kindness by licking his hands, but she still remained inconsolable, and ever and anon struggled to get free. Making the best of his way to Wood Street, he entered the hutch, and placing a little straw in one corner for Bell, threw himself on a bench and dropped asleep. At six o'clock, he was awakened by the barking of the dog, and opening the door, beheld Dallison. The grocer was at the window above, and about to let down a basket of provisions to them. To Leonard's eager inquiries after Amabel, Mr. Bloundel replied by a melancholy shake of the head, and soon afterwards withdrew. With a sad heart, the apprentice then broke his fast, — not forgetting

at the same time the wants of his little companion, — and finding he was not required by his master, he proceeded to Doctor Hodges's residence. He was fortunate enough to find the friendly physician at home; and, after relating to him what had occurred, committed the packet to his custody.

"It will be safer in your keeping than mine," he said; "and if any thing should happen to me, you will, I am sure, observe the wishes of the poor piper."

"Rely upon it I will," replied Hodges. "I am sorry to tell you I have been misled as to the clue I fancied I had obtained to Nizza's retreat. We are as far from the mark as ever."

"Might not the real name of the villain who has assumed the name of Sir Paul Parrivicin be ascertained from the Earl of Rochester?" rejoined Leonard.

"So I thought," replied Hodges; "and I made the attempt yesterday, but it failed. I was at Whitehall, and finding the Earl in the King's presence, suddenly asked him where I could find his friend Sir Paul Parravicin. He

looked surprised at the question, glanced significantly at the monarch, and then carelessly answered that he knew no such person."

"A strange idea crosses me," cried Leonard. "Can it be the King who has assumed this disguise?"

"At one time I suspected as much," rejoined Hodges; "but setting aside your description of the person which does not tally with that of Charles, I am satisfied from other circumstances it is not so. After all, I should not wonder if poor Bell," smoothing her long silky ears as she lay in the apprentice's arms; "should help us to discover her mistress. And now," he added, "I shall go to Wood Street to inquire after Amabel, and will then accompany you to the pest-house. From what you tell me the young chirurgeon said of the piper, I do not despair of his recovery."

"Poor as his chance may appear, it is better, I fear, than Amabel's," sighed the apprentice.

"Ah!" exclaimed Hodges, in a sorrowful tone, "hers is slight indeed."

And perceiving that the apprentice was greatly moved, he waited for a moment till he

had recovered himself, and then motioning him to follow him, they quitted the house together.

On reaching Mr. Bloundel's habitation, Leonard pulled the cord in the hutch, and the grocer appeared at the window.

"My daughter has not left her bed this morning," he said, in answer to the Doctor's inquiries, "and I fear she is much worse. My wife is with her. It would be a great satisfaction to me if you would see her again."

After some little hesitation, Hodges assented, and was drawn up as before. He returned in about half an hour, and his grave countenance convinced Leonard that his worst anticipations were correct. He, therefore, forebore to question him, and they walked towards Cripplegate in silence.

On emerging into the fields, Hodges observed to his companion, "It is strange that I who daily witness such dreadful suffering should be pained by the gradual and easy decline of Amabel. But so it is. Her case touches me more than the worst I have seen of the plague."

"I can easily account for the feeling," groaned Leonard.

"I am happy to say I have prevailed on her,

if she does not improve in a short time,—and there is not the slightest chance of it,—to try the effect of a removal to the country. Her father, also, consents to the plan."

"I am glad to hear it," replied Leonard. "But whither will she go, and who will watch over her?"

"That is not yet settled," rejoined Hodges.

"Oh! that I might be permitted to undertake the office!" cried Leonard, passionately.

"Restrain yourself," said Hodges, in a tone of slight rebuke. "Fitting attendance will be found, if needed."

The conversation then dropped, and they walked briskly forward. They were now within a short distance of the pest-house, and Leonard hearing footsteps behind him, turned and beheld a closed litter, borne by two stout porters, and evidently containing a plague-patient. He stepped aside to let it pass, when Bell suddenly pricking her ears, uttered a singular cry, and bursting from him, flew after the litter, leaping against it and barking joyfully. The porters, who were proceeding at a quick pace, tried to drive her away, but without effect, and she continued her cries until they reached

the gates of the pest-house. In vain Leonard whistled to her and called her back. She paid no attention whatever to him.

"I almost begin to fear," said Hodges, unable to repress a shudder, "that the poor animal will, indeed, be the means of discovering for us the object of our search."

"I understand what you mean," rejoined Leonard, "and am of the same opinion as yourself. Heaven grant we may be mistaken!"

And as he spoke he ran forward, and followed by Hodges, reached the pest-house just as the litter was taken into it.

"Silence that accursed dog," cried one of the porters, "and bid a nurse attend us. We have a patient for the women's ward."

"Let me see her," cried Hodges. "I am a physician."

"Readily, sir," replied the porter. "It is almost over with her, poor soul! It would have saved time and trouble to take her to the plague-pit at once. She cannot last many hours. Curse the dog! will it never cease howling?"

Leonard here seized Bell, fearing she might do some mischief, and with a sad foreboding

beheld the man draw back the curtains of the litter. His fears proved well founded. There, stretched upon the couch, with her dark hair unbound, and flowing in wild disorder over her neck, lay Nizza Macascree. The ghastly paleness of her face could not, however, entirely rob it of its beauty, and her dark eyes were glazed and lustreless. At the sight of her mistress, poor Bell uttered so piteous a cry, that Leonard, moved by compassion, placed her on the pillow beside her, and the sagacious animal did not attempt to approach nearer, but merely licked her cheek. Roused by the touch, Nizza turned to see what was near her, and recognising the animal, made a movement to strain her to her bosom, but the pain she endured was so intense that she sank back with a deep groan.

"From whom did you receive this young woman?" demanded Hodges of one of the porters.

"She was brought to us by two richly-attired lacqueys," replied the man, "in this very litter. They paid us to carry her here without loss of time."

"You have no idea whose servants they were?" pursued Hodges.

"Not the least," replied the fellow; "but I should judge, from the richness of their dress, that they belonged to some nobleman."

"Did they belong to the royal household?" inquired Leonard.

"No, no," rejoined the man. "I am certain as to that."

"The poor girl shall not remain here," observed Hodges to the apprentice. "You must convey her to my residence in Great Knight-rider Street," he added to the porters.

"We will convey her wherever you please," replied the men, "if we are paid for our trouble."

And they were about to close the curtains, when Nizza, having caught sight of the apprentice, slightly raised herself, and cried, in a voice of the utmost anxiety, "Is that you, Leonard?"

"It is," he replied, approaching her.

"Then I shall die happy, since I have seen you once more," she said. "Oh, do not stay near me. You may catch the infection."

"Nizza," said Leonard, disregarding the caution and breathing the words in her ear; "allay my fears by a word. You have not

fallen a victim to the villain who carried you away?"

"I have not, Leonard," she replied solemnly. "I resisted his importunities, his threats, his violence, and would have slain myself rather than have yielded to him. The plague, at length, came to my rescue, and I have reason to be grateful to it; for it has not only delivered me from him, but has brought me to you."

"I must now impose silence upon you," interposed Hodges, laying his finger on his lips; "further conversation will be hurtful."

"One question more and I have done," replied Nizza. "How came Bell with you — and where is my father? Nothing has happened to him?" she continued, observing Leonard's countenance change. "Speak! do not keep me in suspense. Your silence fills me with apprehension. Speak, I implore you. He is dead?"

"No," replied Leonard, "he is not dead — but he is an inmate of this place."

"Ah!" exclaimed Nizza, falling back senseless upon the pillow.

And in this state she was conveyed with the greatest expedition to the Doctor's residence.

Leonard only tarried to visit the piper whom he found slightly delirious, and unable to hold any conversation with him, and promising to return in the evening, he set out after the litter. Nizza was placed in the best apartment of the Doctor's house, and attended by an experienced and trustworthy nurse. But Hodges positively refused to let Leonard see her again, affirming that the excitement was too much for her, and might militate against the chance of her recovery.

"I am not without hopes of bringing her through," he said, "and though it will be a severe struggle, yet as she has youth and a good constitution on her side, I do not despair. If she herself would second me I should be yet more confident."

"How mean you?" inquired Leonard.

"I think if she thought life worth a struggle — if, in short, she believed you would return her attachment, she would rally," answered Hodges.

"I cannot consent to deceive her thus," rejoined Leonard, sadly. "My heart is fixed elsewhere."

"Your heart is fixed upon one who will soon be in her grave," replied the Doctor.

"And with her my affections will be buried," rejoined Leonard, turning away to hide his tears.

So well was the Doctor's solicitude rewarded, that three days after Nizza had come under his care, he pronounced her out of danger. But the violence of the attack left her so weak and exhausted that he still would not allow an interview to take place between her and Leonard. During all this time, Bell never left her side, and her presence was an inexpressible comfort to her. The piper, too, was slowly recovering, and Leonard, who daily visited him, was glad to learn from the young chirurgeon that he would be able to leave the pest-house shortly. Having ascertained from Leonard that his daughter was under the care of Doctor Hodges and likely to do well, the piper begged so earnestly that the packet might not be delivered to her, that after some consultation with Hodges, Leonard restored it to him. He

was delighted to get it back, felt it carefully over to ascertain that the seals were unbroken, and satisfied that all was safe, had it again sewn up in his gown, which he placed under his pillow.

"I would rather disclose the secret to her by word of mouth than in any other way," he said.

Leonard felt doubtful whether the secret would now be disclosed at all, but he made no remark.

Night was drawing on as he quitted the pest-house, and he determined to take this opportunity of visiting the great plague-pit, which lay about a quarter of a mile distant, in a line with the church of All-hallows-in-the-wall; and he, accordingly, proceeded in that direction. The pit which he was about to visit was about forty feet long, twenty wide, and the like number deep. Into this tremendous chasm, the dead were promiscuously thrown, without regard to sex or condition, generally stripped of their clothing, and covered with a slight layer of earth and quick lime.

The sun was setting as Leonard walked towards this dismal place, and he thought he had never witnessed so magnificent a sight. Indeed,

it was remarked that at this fatal season the sunsets were unusually splendid. The glorious orb sank slowly behind Saint Paul's, which formed a prominent object in the view from the fields, and threw out its central tower, its massive roof, and the two lesser towers flanking the portico, into strong relief. Leonard gazed at the mighty fabric, which seemed dilated to twice its size by this light, and wondered whether it was possible that it could ever be destroyed, as predicted by Solomon Eagle.

Long after the sun had set, the sky was stained with crimson, and the grey walls of the city were tinged with rosy radiance. The heat was intense, and Leonard, to cool himself, sat down in the thick grass—for though the crops were ready for the scythe, no mowers could be found,—and gazing upwards strove to mount in spirit from the tainted earth towards heaven. After awhile he arose, and proceeded towards the plague-pit. The grass was trampled down near it, and there were marks of frequent cart-wheels upon the sod. Great heaps of soil, thrown out of the excavation, lay on either side. Holding a handkerchief steeped in vinegar to his face, Leonard ventured to the brink of the

pit. But even this precaution could not counteract the horrible effluvia arising from it. It was more than half-filled with dead bodies, and through the putrid and heaving mass many disjointed limbs and ghastly faces could be discerned, the long hair of women, and the tiny arms of children, appearing on the surface. It was a horrible sight—so horrible, that it possessed a fascination peculiar to itself, and, in spite of his loathing, Leonard lingered to gaze at it. Strange and fantastic thoughts possessed him. He fancied that the legs and arms moved,—that the eyes of some of the corpses opened and glared at him—and that the whole rotting mass was endowed with animation. So appalled was he by this idea that he turned away, and at that moment beheld a vehicle approaching. It was the dead-cart, charged with a heavy load to increase the already redundant heap.

The same inexplicable and irresistible feeling of curiosity that induced Leonard to continue gazing upon the loathly objects in the pit, now prompted him to stay and see what would ensue. Two persons were with the cart, and one of them, to Leonard's infinite surprise and

disgust, proved to be Chowles. He had no time, however, for the expression of any sentiment, for the cart halted at a little distance from him, when its conductors, turning it round, backed it towards the edge of the pit. The horse was then taken out, and Chowles calling to Leonard, the latter involuntarily knelt down to guide its descent, while the other assistant, who had proceeded to the further side of the chasm, threw the light of a lantern full upon the grisly load, which was thus shot into the gulf below.

Shovelling a sufficient quantity of earth and lime into the pit to cover the bodies, Chowles and his companion departed, leaving Leonard alone. He continued there a few moments longer, and was about to follow them, when a prolonged and piercing cry smote his ear, and looking in the direction of the sound, he perceived a figure running with great swiftness towards the pit. As no pursuers appeared, Leonard could scarcely doubt that this was one of the distracted persons he had heard of, who, in the frenzy produced by the intolerable anguish of their sores, would often rush to the plague-pit and bury themselves, and he

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The Plague Pit.

therefore resolved, if possible, to prevent the fatal attempt. Accordingly, he placed himself in the way of the runner, and endeavoured with outstretched arms to stop him. But the latter dashed him aside with great violence, and hurrying to the brink of the pit, uttered a fearful cry, and exclaiming, "She is here! she is here! —I shall find her amongst them!" flung himself into the abyss.

As soon as he could shake off the horror inspired by this dreadful action, Leonard ran to the pit, and gazing into it, beheld him by the imperfect light struggling in the horrible mass in which he was partially immersed. The frenzied man had now, however, begun to repent his rashness, and cried out for aid. But this Leonard found it impossible to afford him; and, seeing he must speedily perish if left to himself, he ran after the dead-cart, and overtaking it just as it reached Moorgate, informed Chowles what had happened, and begged him to return with him.

"There will be no use in helping him out," rejoined Chowles, in a tone of indifference. "We shall have to take him back in a couple of hours. No, no; let him remain where he is.

There is scarcely a night that some crazy being does not destroy himself in the same way. We never concern ourselves about such persons, except to strip them of their apparel."

"Unfeeling wretch!" cried Leonard, unable to restrain his indignation. "Give me your fork, and I will pull him out myself."

Instead of surrendering the implement, Chowles flourished it over his head with the intention of striking the apprentice, but the latter nimbly avoided the blow, and snatching it from his grasp, ran back to the plague-pit. He was followed by Chowles and the burier, who threatened him with loud oaths. Regardless of their menaces, Leonard fixed the hook in the dress of the struggling man, and exerting all his strength drew him out of the abyss. He had just lodged him in safety on the brink when Chowles and his companion came up.

"Keep off!" cried Leonard, brandishing the fork as he spoke, "you shall neither commit robbery nor murder here. If you will assist this unfortunate gentleman, I have no doubt you will be well rewarded. If not, get hence, or advance at your peril."

"Well," returned Chowles, who began to fancy something might be made of the matter, "if you think we should be rewarded we would convey the gentleman back to his own home, provided we can ascertain where it is. But I am afraid he may die on the way."

"In that case you can apply to his friends," rejoined Leonard. "He must not be abandoned thus."

"First, let us know who he is," returned Chowles. "Is he able to speak?"

"I know not," answered Leonard. "Bring the lantern this way, and let us examine his countenance."

Chowles complied, and held the light over the unfortunate person. His attire was rich, but in great disorder, and sullied by the loathsome mass in which he had been plunged. He was in the flower of youth, and his features must have been remarkable for their grace and beauty, but they were now of a livid hue, and swollen and distorted by pain. Still, Leonard recognised them.

"Gracious heaven!" he exclaimed. "It is Sir Paul Parravicin."

"Sir Paul Parravicin!" echoed Chowles.

"By all that 's wonderful, so it is! Here is a lucky chance! Bring the dead-cart hither, Jonas, quick — quick! I shall put him under the care of Judith Malmayns."

And the burier hurried off as fast as his legs could carry him.

"Had I known who it was," exclaimed Leonard, gazing with abhorrence at the miserable object before him, "I would have left him to die the death he so richly merits!"

A deep groan broke from the sufferer.

"Have no fear, Sir Paul," said Chowles. "You are in good hands. Every care shall be taken of you, and you shall be cured by Judith Malmayns."

"She shall not come near me," rejoined Parravicin, faintly. "You will take care of me?" he added, in an imploring tone to Leonard.

"You appeal in vain to me," rejoined the apprentice, sternly. "You are justly punished for your treatment of Nizza Macascree."

"I am — I am" — groaned Parravicin, "but she will be speedily avenged. I shall soon join her in that pit."

"She is not there," replied Leonard, bit-

terly. "She is fast recovering from the plague."

"Is she not dead?" demanded Parravicin, with frightful eagerness. "I was told she was thrown into that horrible chasm."

"You were deceived," replied Leonard. "She was taken to the pest-house by your orders, and would have perished if she had not found a friend to aid her. She is now out of danger."

"Then I no longer desire to die," cried Parravicin, desperately, "I will live — live."

"Do not delude yourself," replied Leonard, coldly, "you have little chance of recovery, and should employ the short time left you in praying to heaven for forgiveness of your sins."

"Tush!" exclaimed Parravicin, fiercely, "I shall not weary heaven with ineffectual supplications. I well know I am past all forgiveness. No," he added with a fearful imprecation, "since Nizza is alive, I will not die."

"Right, Sir Paul, right," rejoined Chowles, "put a bold face on it, and I will answer for it you will get over the attack. Have no fear of Judith Malmayns," he added, in a significant

tone. "However she may treat others, she will cure *you*."

"I will make it worth her while to do so," rejoined Parravicin.

"Here is the cart," cried Chowles, seeing the vehicle approach. "I will take you in the first place to Saint Paul's. Judith must see you as soon as possible."

"Take me where you please," rejoined Parravicin, faintly, "and remember what I have said. If I die, the nurse will get nothing: — if I am cured, she shall be proportionately rewarded."

"I will not forget it," replied Chowles. And with the help of Jonas, he placed the Knight carefully in the cart. "You need not trouble yourself further about him," he added to Leonard.

"Before he quits this place, I must know who he is," rejoined the latter, placing himself at the horse's head.

"You know his name as well as I do," replied Chowles.

"Parravicin is not his real name," rejoined Leonard.

"Indeed!" exclaimed Chowles, "this is

news to me. But no matter who he is, he is rich enough to pay well. So stand aside, and let us go. We have no time to waste in further parleying."

"I will not move till my question is answered," replied Leonard.

"We will see that," said Jonas, approaching him behind, and dealing him so severe a blow on the head that he stretched him senseless on the ground. "Shall we throw him into the pit?" he added, to Chowles.

The latter hesitated for a moment, and then said, "No, no, it is not worth while. It may bring us into trouble. We have no time to lose." And they then put the cart in motion, and took the way to Saint Paul's.

On coming to himself, Leonard had some difficulty in recalling what had happened; and when the whole train of circumstances rushed upon his mind, he congratulated himself that he had escaped further injury. "When I think of the hands I have been placed in," he murmured, "I cannot but be grateful that they did not throw me into the pit, where no discovery could have been made as to how I came to an end. But I will not rest till I have as-

certained the name and rank of Nizza's persecutor. I have no doubt they have taken him to Saint Paul's, and will proceed thither at once."

With this view, he hastened towards the nearest city gate, and passing through it, shaped his course towards the cathedral. It was a fine starlight night, and though there was no moon, the myriad lustres glowing in the deep and cloudless vault, rendered every object plainly distinguishable. At this hour, little restraint was placed upon the sick, and they wandered about the streets uttering dismal cries. Some would fling themselves upon bulks or steps where they were not unfrequently found the next morning bereft of life. Most of those not attacked by the distemper kept close house; but there were some few reckless beings who passed the night in the wildest revelry, braving the fate awaiting them. As Leonard passed Saint Michael's church, in Basinghall Street, he perceived, to his great surprise, that it was lighted up, and at first supposed some service was going on within it, but on approaching he heard strains of lively and most irreverend music issuing from within. Pushing open the

door, he entered the sacred edifice, and found it occupied by a party of twenty young men, accompanied by a like number of females, some of whom were playing at dice and cards, some drinking, others singing Bacchanalian melodies, others dancing along the aisles to the notes of a theorbo and spinet. Leonard was so inexpressibly shocked by what he beheld that, unable to contain himself, he mounted the steps of the pulpit and called to them in a loud voice to desist from their scandalous conduct and no longer profane the house of God. But they treated his remonstrances with laughter and derision, and some of the party forming themselves into a group round the pulpit, entreated him to preach to them.

"We want a little variety," said one of the group, a good-looking young man, upon whom the wine had evidently made some impression, — "we are tired of drinking and play, and may as well listen to a sermon, especially an original one. Hold forth to us, I say."

"I would hold forth till daybreak, if I thought it would produce any impression," returned Leonard. "But I perceive you are too hardened to be aroused to repentance."

"Repentance!" cried another of the assemblage. "Do you know whom you address? These gentlemen are the Brotherhood of Saint Michael, and I am the principal. We are determined to enjoy the few days or hours we may have left — that is all. We are not afraid of the future, and are resolved to make the most of the present."

"Ay, ay," cried the others with a great shout of laughter, which, however, was interrupted by a cry of anguish from one of the party.

"There is another person seized," said the principal; "take him away, brothers. This is owing to listening to a sermon. Let us return to our wine."

"Will you not accept this awful warning?" cried Leonard. "You will all share your companion's fate."

"We anticipate nothing else," returned the principal: "and are therefore resolved to banish reflection. A week ago, the Brotherhood of Saint Michael consisted of forty persons. We are already diminished to half the number, but are not the less merry on that account. On the contrary, we are more jovial than ever.

We have agreed that whoever shall be seized with the distemper, shall be instantly conveyed to the pest-house, so that the hilarity of the others shall not be interrupted. The poor fellow who has just been attacked has left behind him a beautiful mistress. She is yours, if you choose to join us."

"Ay, stop with us," cried a young and very pretty woman, taking his hand, and drawing him towards the company who were dancing beneath the aisles.

But Leonard disengaged himself, and hurried away amid the laughter and hootings of the assemblage. The streets, despite their desolate appearance, were preferable to the spot he had just quitted, and he seemed to breathe more freely when he got to a little distance from the polluted fane. He had now entered Wood Street, but all was still as death, and he paused to gaze up at his master's window, but there was no one at it. Many a lover, unable to behold the object of his affections, has in some measure satisfied the yearning of his heart by gazing at her dwelling, and feeling he was near her. Many a sad heart has been cheered by beholding a light at a window, or a shadow

on its closed curtains, and such would have been Leonard's feelings if he had not been depressed by the thought of Amabel's precarious state of health.

While thus wrapt in mournful thought, he observed three figures slowly approaching from the further end of the street, and he instinctively withdrew into a doorway. He had reason to congratulate himself upon the precaution, as, when the party drew nearer, he recognised with a pang that shot to his heart the voice of Rochester. A moment's observation from his place of concealment showed him that the Earl was accompanied by Sir George Etherege and Pillichody. They paused within a short distance of him, and he could distinctly overhear their conversation.

"You have not yet told us why you brought us here, my lord?" said Etherege to Rochester, after the latter had gazed for a few moments in silence at the house, "Are you resolved to make another attempt to carry off the girl — and failing in it to give her up for ever?"

"You have guessed my purpose precisely," returned Rochester. "Doctor Hodges has informed a friend of mine that the pretty Amabel

has fallen into a decline. The poor soul is, doubtless, pining for me, and it would be the height of inhumanity to let her perish."

Leonard ground his teeth with suppressed rage.

"Then you mean to make her Countess of Rochester after all," laughed Etherege. "I thought you had determined to carry off Mistress Mallet."

"Old Rowley declares he will send me to the Tower if I do," replied Rochester, "and though his threats would scarcely deter me from acting as I think proper, I have no inclination for marriage at present. What a pity, Etherege, that one cannot in these affairs have the money one's self, and give the wife to one's friend."

"That is easily accomplished," replied Etherege, laughingly; "especially where you have a friend so devoted as myself. But do you mean to carry off Amabel to-night?"

"Ay, now we come to business," interposed Pillichody. "Bolts and barricadoes! your lordship has only to say the word, and I will break into the house, and bear her off for you."

"Your former conduct is a good guarantee for your present success, truly," returned Rochester, with a sneer. "No, no; I shall postpone my design for the present. I have ascertained from the source whence I obtained information of Amabel's illness, that she is to be removed into the country. This will exactly suit my purpose, and put her completely in my power."

"Then nothing is to be done to-night?" said Pillichody, secretly congratulating himself on his escape. "By my sword! I feel equal to the most desperate attempt."

"Your courage and dexterity must be reserved for some more favourable occasion," replied Rochester.

"If not to carry off the girl, I must again inquire why your lordship has come hither?" demanded Etherege.

"To be frank with you, my sole motive was to gaze at the house that contains her," replied Rochester, in a voice that bespoke his sincerity. "I have before told you, that she has a strong hold upon my heart. I have not seen her for some weeks, and during that time

have endeavoured to obliterate her image by making love to a dozen others. But it will not do. She still continues absolute mistress of my affections. I sometimes think, if I can obtain her in no other way, I shall be rash enough to marry her."

"Pshaw! this must never be," said Etherege.

"Were I to lose her altogether, I should be inconsolable," cried Rochester.

"As inconsolable as I am for the rich widow of Watling Street, who died a fortnight ago of the plague and left her wealth to her footman," cried Pillichody, drawing forth his handkerchief, and applying it to his eyes, — "oh! oh!"

"Silence, fool!" cried Rochester; "I am in no mood for buffoonery. If you shed tears for any one, it should be for your master."

"Truly, I am grieved for him," replied Pillichody; "but I object to the term 'master.' Sir Paul Parravicin, as he chooses to be called, is my patron, not my master. He permits me a very close familiarity, not to say friendship."

"Well, then, your patron," rejoined Rochester, scornfully. "How is he going on to-night?"

"I feared to tell your lordship," replied Pillichody, "lest it should spoil your mirth, but he broke out of his chamber a few hours ago, and has not been discovered since. Most likely, he will be found in the plague-pit or the Thames in the morning, for he was in such an infuriated state that it is the opinion of his attendants he would certainly destroy himself. You know he was attacked two days after Nizza Macascree was seized by the pestilence, and his brain has been running upon the poor girl ever since."

"Alas!" exclaimed Rochester, "it is a sad end. I am wearied of this infected city, and shall be heartily glad to quit it. A few months in the country with Amabel will be enchanting."

"*Apropos* of melancholy subjects," said Etherege, "your masque of the Dance of Death has caused great consternation at court. Mistress Stewart declares she cannot get that strange fellow who performed such fantastic tricks in the skeleton dance out of her head."

"You mean Chowles," replied the Earl.

"He is a singular being certainly — once a coffin-maker, and now, I believe, a burier of the dead. He takes up his abode in a crypt in Saint Faith's, and leads an incomprehensible life. As we return, we shall pass the cathedral, and can see whether he is astir."

"Readily," replied Etherege. "Do you desire to tarry here longer, or shall we proceed before you, while you indulge your tender meditations undisturbed?"

"Leave me," replied Rochester, "I shall be glad to be alone for a few moments."

Etherege and Pillichody then proceeded slowly towards Cheapside, while the Earl remained with his arms folded upon his breast, and his gaze fixed upon the house. Leonard watched him with intense curiosity, and had great difficulty in controlling himself. Though the Earl was armed, while he had only his staff, he could have easily mastered him by assailing him unawares. But Leonard's generous nature revolted at the unworthy suggestion, and he resolved if he attacked him at all, to give him time to stand upon his guard. A moment's reflection, however, satisfied him that his wisest course would be to remain concealed. He was

now in possession of the Earl's plan, and with the help of Doctor Hodges could easily defeat it; whereas if he appeared, it would be evident that he had overheard what had passed, and some other scheme, to which he could not be privy, would be necessarily adopted. Influenced by this consideration, he suffered the Earl to depart unmolested, and when he had got to some distance followed him. Rochester's companions were waiting for him in Cheapside, and joining them, they all three proceeded towards the cathedral. They entered the great northern door, and Leonard, who was now well acquainted with all the approaches, passed through the door at the north side of the choir, to which he had been directed on a former occasion by Solomon Eagle. He found the party guided by the old verger — the only one of its former keepers who still lingered about the place, — and preparing to descend to Saint Faith's. Leonard followed as near as he could without exposing himself, and on gaining the subterranean church easily contrived to screen himself behind the ponderous ranks of pillars.

By this time, they had reached the door of the charnel. It was closed, but Rochester

knocked against it, and Chowles presently appeared. He seemed greatly surprised at seeing the Earl, nor was the latter less astonished when he learnt that Parravicin was within the vault. He desired to be shown to his friend, and Chowles ushered him into the crypt. Leonard would have followed them, but as Etherege and the others declined entering the charnel, and remained at the door, he could not do so.

Shortly after this, the sick man was brought out, stretched upon a pallet, borne by Chowles and Judith, and the party proceeded slowly, and occasionally relieving each other to the great western entrance where a coach being procured by Pillichody, Parravicin was placed within it with Judith and Chowles, and orders being given in an under tone to the driver, he departed. The others then proceeded towards Ludgate, while Leonard, again disappointed, retraced his steps to Wood Street.

CHAPTER V.

HOW SAINT PAUL'S WAS USED AS A PEST-HOUSE.

The distemper had by this time increased to such a frightful extent, that the pest-houses being found wholly inadequate to contain the number of sick persons sent to them, it was resolved by the civic authorities, who had obtained the sanction of the Dean and Chapter of Saint Paul's for that purpose, to convert the cathedral into a receptacle for the infected. Accordingly, a meeting was held in the Convocation House to make final arrangements. It was attended by Sir John Lawrence, the Lord Mayor; by Sir George Waterman, and Sir Charles Doe, sheriffs; by Doctor Sheldon, Archbishop of Canterbury; by the Duke of Albemarle, the Earl of Craven, and a few other zealous and humane persons. Several mem-

bers of the College of Physicians were likewise present, and, amongst others, Doctor Hodges; and the expediency of the measure being fully agreed upon, it was determined to carry it into immediate execution.

The cloisters surrounding the Convocation House were crowded with sick persons, drawn thither by the rumour of what was going forward; and when the meeting adjourned to the cathedral, these unfortunate beings followed them, and were with some difficulty kept aloof from the uninfected by the attendants. A very earnest and touching address was next pronounced by the Archbishop. Calling upon his hearers to look on themselves as already dead to the world,—to regard the present visitation as a just punishment of their sins, and to rejoice that their sufferings would be so soon terminated, when, if they sincerely and heartily repented, they would at once be transported from the depths of wretchedness and misery to regions of unfading bliss; he concluded by stating that he, and all those around him, were prepared to devote themselves, without regard to their own safety, to the preservation of their

fellow-citizens, and that they would leave nothing undone to stop the ravages of the devouring scourge.

It chanced that Leonard Holt was present on this occasion, and as he listened to the eloquent discourse of the Archbishop, and gazed at the group around him, all equally zealous in the good cause, and equally regardless of themselves, he could not but indulge a hope that their exertions might be crowned with success. It was indeed a touching sight to see the melancholy congregation to whom his address was delivered—many, nay, most of whom, were on the verge of dissolution;—and Leonard Holt was so moved by the almost apostolic fervour of the prelate, that, but for the thought of Amabel, he might have followed the example of several of the auditors, and devoted himself altogether to the service of the sick.

His discourse concluded, the Archbishop and most of his companions quitted the cathedral. Hodges, however, and three of the physicians, remained behind to superintend the necessary preparations. Shortly after, a large number of pallets were brought in, and ranged along the nave and aisles at short distances from each

other; and before night the interior of the structure presented the complete appearance of an hospital. Acting under the directions of Doctor Hodges, Leonard Holt lent his assistance in arranging the pallets, in covering them with bedding and blankets, and in executing any other service required of him. A sufficient number of chirurgeons and nurses were then sent for, and such was the expedition used that on that very night most of the pallets were occupied. Thus the cathedral underwent another afflicting change. A blight had come over it, mildewing its holy walls, and tainting and polluting its altars. Its aisles, once trodden by grave and reverend ecclesiastics, and subsequently haunted by rufflers, bullies, and other worthless characters, were now filled with miserable wretches, stricken with a loathsome and fatal distemper. Its chapels and shrines, formerly adorned with rich sculptures and costly ornaments, but stripped of them at times when they were looked upon as idolatrous and profane, were now occupied by nurses, chirurgeons, and their attendants; while every niche and corner was filled with surgical implements, phials, drugs, poultices, foul rags, and linen.

In less than a week after it had been converted into a pest-house, the cathedral was crowded to overflowing. Upwards of three hundred pallets were set up in the nave, in the aisles, in the transepts, and in the choir, and even in the chapels. But these proving insufficient, many poor wretches who were brought thither were placed on the cold flags, and protected only by a single blanket. At night, the scene was really terrific. The imperfect light borne by the attendants fell on the couches, and revealed the livid countenances of their occupants, while the vaulted roof rang with shrieks and groans so horrible and heart-piercing as to be scarcely endured, except by those whose nerves were firmly strung, or had not become blunted by their constant recurrence. At such times, too, some unhappy creature, frenzied by agony, would burst from his couch, and rend the air with his cries, until overtaken and overpowered by his attendants. On one occasion, it happened that a poor wretch, who had been thus caught, broke loose a second time, and darting through the door leading to the winding stone staircase in the northern transept, gained the ambulatory, and being closely

by J. Franklin.

followed, to escape his pursuers, sprang through one of the arched openings, and falling from a height of near sixty feet, was dashed in pieces on the flagged floor beneath.

A walk through this mighty lazar-house would have furnished a wholesome lesson to the most reckless observer. It seemed to contain all the sick of the city. And yet it was not so. Hundreds were expiring in their own dwellings, and the other pest-houses continued crowded as before. Still, as a far greater number of the infected were here congregated, and could be seen at one view, the picture was incomparably more impressive. Every part of the cathedral was occupied. Those who could not find room inside it crouched beneath the columns of the portico on rugs or blankets, and implored the chirurgeons as they passed to attend them. Want of room also drove others into Saint Faith's, and here the scene was, if possible, more hideous. In this dismal region it was found impossible to obtain a free circulation of air, and consequently the pestilential effluvia, unable to escape, acquired such malignancy, that it was almost certain destruction to inhale it. After a time, few of the

nurses and attendants would venture thither; and to take a patient to Saint Faith's was considered tantamount to consigning him to the grave.

Whether Judith Malmayns had succeeded or not in curing Sir Paul Parravicin, it is not our present purpose to relate. Soon after the cathedral was converted into a lazar-house, she returned thither, and, in spite of the opposition of Doctor Hodges, was appointed one of the nurses. It must not be supposed that her appointment was the result of any ill design. Such was the difficulty of obtaining attendance that little choice was left, and the nurses being all of questionable character, it was supposed she was only a shade worse than her fellows, while she was known to be active and courageous. And this was speedily proved; for when Saint Faith's was deserted by the others, she remained at her post, and quitted it neither night nor day. A large pit was digged in the open space at the north-east corner of the cathedral, and to this great numbers of bodies were nightly conveyed by Chowles and Jonas. But it was soon filled, and they were compelled to

resort, as before, to Finsbury fields, and to another vast pit near Aldgate. When not engaged in this revolting employment, Chowles took up his quarters in the crypt, where, in spite of his propinquity to the sick, he indulged himself in his customary revelry. He and Judith had amassed, in one way or other, a vast quantity of spoil, and frequently planned how they would spend it when the pestilence ceased. Their treasure was carefully concealed in a cell in one of the secret passages with which they were acquainted, leading from Saint Faith's to the upper structure.

One night, on his return to Finsbury fields, as Chowles was seated in the crypt, with a pipe in his mouth, and a half-finished flask of wine before him, he was startled by the sudden entrance of Judith, who, rushing up to him, seized him by the throat, and almost choked him before he could extricate himself.

"What is the matter?—would you strangle me, you murderous harridan?" he cried.

"Ay, that I would," replied Judith, preparing to renew the attack.

"Stand off!" rejoined Chowles, springing

back, and snatching up a spade, "or I will dash out your brains. Are you mad?" he continued, gazing fearfully at her.

"I am angry enough to make me so," she replied, shaking her clenched fists at him.—"But I will be revenged—revenged I tell you."

"Revenged!" cried Chowles in astonishment—"for what! What have I done?"

"You do well to affect ignorance," rejoined Judith, "but you cannot deceive me. No one but you can have done it."

"Done what!" exclaimed Chowles, in increasing astonishment. "Has our hoard been discovered?"

"Ay, and been carried off—by you—you!" screamed Judith, with a look worthy of a fury.

"By my soul you are wrong," cried Chowles. "I have never touched it,—never even approached the hiding-place, except in your presence."

"Liar!" returned Judith, "the whole hoard is gone;—the plunder I obtained in Newgate,—the Earl of Rochester's plate,—all the rings trinkets, and rich apparel I have picked up

since,—everything is gone;—and who but you can be the robber?"

"It is difficult to say," rejoined Chowles. "But I swear to you, you suspect me wrongfully."

"Restore it," replied Judith, "or tell me where it is hidden. If not, I will be the death of you!"

"Let us go to the hiding-place," replied Chowles, whose uneasiness was not diminished by the menace. "You may be mistaken, and I hope you are."

Though he uttered the latter part of his speech with seeming confidence, his heart misgave him. To conceal his trepidation, he snatched up a lamp, and passing through the secret door, hurried along the narrow stone passage. He was about to open the cell, when he perceived near it the tall figure of the enthusiast.

"There is the robber!" he cried to Judith. "I have found him. It is Solomon Eagle. Villain! you have purloined our hoard!"

"I have done so," replied Solomon Eagle, "and I will carry off all other spoil you may obtain. Think not to hide it from me. I can

watch you when you see me not, and track you when you suppose me afar off."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Chowles, trembling. "I begin to think he is possessed of supernatural power," he added, in an undertone to Judith.

"Go on," pursued Solomon Eagle, "continue to plunder and destroy. Pursue your guilty career, and see what reward you will reap."

"Restore what you have robbed us of," cried Judith, in a menacing tone, "or dread the consequences."

"Woman, you threaten idly," returned Solomon Eagle. "Your ill-gotten treasure is gone — whither you will never know. Get hence!" he added in a terrible tone, "or I will rid the earth of you both."

So awed were they by his voice and gestures that they slunk away with a discomfited air, and returned to the crypt.

"If we are always to be robbed in this manner," observed Chowles, "we had better shift our quarters, and practise elsewhere."

"He shall not repeat the offence with impunity," returned Judith. "I will speedily get rid of him."

"Beware!" cried a voice, which they recognised as that of Solomon Eagle, though whence proceeding they could not precisely determine. The pair looked at each other uneasily, but neither spoke a word.

Meanwhile, Leonard Holt did not omit to pay a daily visit to the cathedral. It was a painful contemplation, and yet not without deep interest, to behold the constant succession of patients, most of whom were swept away by the scourge in the course of a couple of days, or even in a shorter period. Out of every hundred persons attacked, five did not recover; and whether the virulence of the distemper increased, or the summer heats rendered its victims more easily assailable, certain it is they were carried off far more expeditiously than before. Doctor Hodges was unremitting in his attentions, but his zeal and anxiety availed nothing. He had to contend with a disease over which medicine exercised little control.

One morning, as he was about to enter the cathedral, he met Leonard beneath the portico, and as soon as the latter caught sight of him, he hurried towards him.

"I have been in search of you," he said,

"and was about to proceed to your residence. Mr. Bloundel wishes to see you immediately. Amabel is worse."

"I will go with you at once," replied the Doctor.

And they took the way to Wood Street.

"From a few words let fall by my master, I imagine he intends sending Amabel into the country to-morrow," said Leonard, as they proceeded.

"I hope so," replied Hodges. "He has already delayed it too long. You will be glad to hear that Nizza Macascree is quite recovered. To-morrow, or the next day, she will be able to see you with safety."

"Heaven knows where I may be to-morrow," rejoined Leonard. "Wherever Amabel goes, I shall not be far off."

"Faithful to the last!" exclaimed Hodges. "Well, I shall not oppose you. We must take care the Earl of Rochester does not get a hint of our proceedings. At this time, a chance meeting (were it nothing more) might prove fatal to the object of our solicitude."

Leonard said nothing, but the colour fled his cheek, and his lip slightly quivered. In a

few seconds more, they reached the grocer's house.

They found him at the window, anxiously expecting them; and Doctor Hodges being drawn up in the same way as before, was conducted to Amabel's chamber. She was reclining in an easy chair, with the Bible on her knee; and though she was much wasted away, she looked more lovely than ever. A slight hectic flush increased the brilliancy of her eyes, which had now acquired that ominous lustre peculiar to persons in a decline. There were other distressing symptoms in her appearance which the skilful physician well knew how to interpret. To an inexperienced eye, however, she would have appeared charming. Nothing could exceed the delicacy of her complexion, or the lovely mould of her features, which, though they had lost much of their fulness and roundness, had gained in expression; while the pencilled brows clearly traced upon her snowy forehead, the long dark eyelashes shading her cheek, and the rich satin tresses drooping over her shoulders, completed her attractions. Her mother stood by her side, and not far from her sat little Christiana, amusing herself with some

childish toy, and ever and anon stealing an anxious glance at her sister. Taking Amabel's arm, and sighing to himself to think how thin it was, the Doctor placed his finger upon her pulse. Whatever might be his secret opinion, he thought fit to assume a hopeful manner, and looking smilingly at her, said, "You are better than I expected, but your departure to the country must not be deferred."

"Since it is my father's wish that I should go," replied Amabel, gently, "I am quite willing to comply. But I feel it will be of no avail, and I would rather pass the rest of my life here than with strangers. I cannot be happier than I am now."

"Perhaps not," replied Hodges; "but a few weeks spent in some salubrious spot will remove all apprehensions as to your health. You will find your strength return, and with it the desire of life."

"My life is in the hands of my Maker," replied Amabel, "and I am ready to resign it whenever it shall be required of me. At the same time, however anxious I may be to quit a world which appears a blank to me, I would make every effort for the sake of those whose

happiness is dearer to me than my own, to purchase a complete restoration to health. If my father desires me to try removal to the country, and you think it will have a beneficial effect, I am ready to go. But do not urge it, unless you think there is a chance of my recovery."

"I will tell you frankly," replied the Doctor, "if you remain here you have not many weeks to live."

"But if I go, will you promise me health?" rejoined Amabel. "Do not deceive me. Is there a hope?"

"Unquestionably," replied the Doctor. "Change of air will work wonders."

"I beseech you not to hesitate — for my sake do not, dearest daughter," said Mrs. Bloundel, with difficulty repressing tears.

"And for mine," added her father more firmly, yet with deep emotion.

"I have already expressed my readiness to accede to your wishes," replied Amabel. "Whenever you have made arrangements for me, I will set out."

"And now comes the question — where is she to go?" remarked Hodges.

"I have a sister who lives as housekeeper

at Lord Craven's seat, Ashdown Park," replied Mr. Bloundel. "She shall go thither, and her aunt will take every care of her. The mansion is situated amid the Berkshire hills, and the air is the purest and best in England."

"Nothing can be better," replied Hodges; "but who is to escort her thither?"

"Leonard Holt," replied Mr. Bloundel. "He will gladly undertake the office."

"No doubt," rejoined Hodges, "but cannot you go yourself?"

"Impossible!" returned the grocer, a shade passing over his countenance.

"Neither do I wish it," observed Amabel. "I am content to be under the safe-guard of Leonard."

"Amabel," said her father, "you know not what I shall endure in thus parting with you. I would give all I possess to be able to accompany you, but a sense of duty restrains me. I have taken the resolution to remain here with my family during the continuance of the pestilence, and I must abide by it. I little thought how severely my constancy would be tried. But hard though it be, I must submit. I shall commit you, therefore, to the care of an all-

merciful Providence, who will not fail to watch over and protect you."

"Have no fear for me, father," replied Amabel; "and do not weep, dear mother," she added to Mrs. Bloundel, who, unable to restrain her grief, was now drowned in tears; "I shall be well cared for. If we meet no more in this world, our reunion is certain in that to come. I have given you much pain and uneasiness, but it will be an additional grief to me if I think you feel farther anxiety on my account."

"We do not, my dear child," replied Mr. Bloundel. "I am well assured all is for the best, and if it pleases Heaven to spare you, I shall rejoice beyond measure in your return. If not, I shall feel a firm reliance that you will continue in the same happy frame, as at present, to the last, and that we shall meet above, where there will be no further separation."

"I cannot bear to part with her," cried Mrs. Bloundel, clasping her arms round her daughter —"I cannot — I cannot!"

"Restrain yourself, Honora," said her husband; "you will do her an injury."

"She must not be over-excited," interposed

Hodges, in a low tone, and gently drawing the afflicted mother away. "The sooner," he added to Mr. Bloundel, "she now sets out the better."

"I feel it," replied the grocer. "She shall start to-morrow morning."

"I will undertake to procure horses," replied Hodges, "and Leonard will be ready at any moment."

With this, he took his leave, and descending by the pulley, communicated to Leonard what had occurred.

In spite of his fears on her account, the prospect of again beholding Amabel so transported the apprentice that he could scarcely attend to what was said respecting her. When he grew calmer, it was arranged that all should be in readiness at an early hour on the following morning; that a couple of horses should be provided; and that Amabel should be let down fully equipped for the journey. This settled, Leonard, at the Doctor's request, accompanied him to his residence.

They were scarcely out of sight, when a man, who had been concealed behind the hutch in such a position that not a word that had

passed escaped him, issued from his hiding-place, and darting down the first alley on the right, made the best of his way to Whitehall.

Up to this time, Doctor Hodges had not judged it prudent to allow a meeting between Leonard and Nizza Macascree, but now, from reasons of his own, he resolved no longer to delay it. Accordingly, on reaching his dwelling, he took the apprentice to her chamber. She was standing in a pensive attitude, near a window which looked towards the river, and as she turned on his entrance, Leonard perceived that her eyes were filled with tears. Blushing deeply, she advanced towards him, and greeted him with all the warmth of her affectionate nature. She had quite recovered her good looks, and Leonard could not but admit that, had he seen her before his heart was plighted to another, it must have been given to her. Comparisons are ungracious, and tastes differ more perhaps as to beauty than on any other point, but if Amabel and the piper's daughter had been placed together it would not have been difficult to determine to which of the two the palm of superior loveliness should

be assigned. There was a witchery in the magnificent black eyes of the latter — in her exquisitely-formed mouth and pearly teeth — in her clear nut-brown complexion — in her dusky and luxuriant tresses, and in her light elastic figure, with which more perfect but less piquant charms could not compete. Such seemed to be the opinion of Doctor Hodges, for as he gazed at her with unaffected admiration, he exclaimed, as if to himself — "I'faith, if I had to choose between the two, I know which it would be."

This exclamation somewhat disconcerted the parties to whom it referred, and the Doctor did not relieve their embarrassment by adding, "Well, I perceive I am in the way. You must have much to say to each other that can in nowise interest me. Excuse me a moment, while I see that the horses are ordered."

So saying, and disregarding Leonard's expostulating looks, he hurried out of the room, and shut the door after him.

Hitherto, the conversation had been unrestrained and agreeable on both sides, but now they were left alone together, neither appeared able to utter a word. Nizza cast her eyes

timidly on the ground, while Leonard caressed little Bell, who had been vainly endeavouring by her gamesome tricks to win his attention.

"Doctor Hodges spoke of ordering horses," said Nizza, at length, breaking silence. "Are you going on a journey?"

"I am about to take Amabel to Ashdown Park, in Berkshire, to-morrow morning," replied Leonard. "She is dangerously ill."

"Of the plague?" asked Nizza, anxiously.

"Of a yet worse disorder," replied Leonard, heaving a deep sigh—"of a broken heart."

"Alas! I pity her from my soul!" replied Nizza, in a tone of the deepest commiseration. "Does her mother go with her?"

"No," replied Leonard, "I alone shall attend her. She will be placed under the care of a near female relative at Ashdown."

"Would it not be better,—would it not be safer, if she is in the precarious state you describe, that some one of her own sex should accompany her?" said Nizza.

"I should greatly prefer it," rejoined Leonard, "and so I am sure would Amabel. But where is such a person to be found?"

"I will go with you if you desire it," replied

Nizza, "and will watch over her, and tend her as a sister."

"Are you equal to the journey?" inquired Leonard, somewhat doubtfully.

"Fully," replied Nizza. "I am entirely recovered, and able to undergo far more fatigue than an invalid like Amabel."

"It will relieve me from a world of anxiety if this can be accomplished," rejoined Leonard. "I will consult Doctor Hodges on the subject on his return."

"What do you desire to consult me about?" cried the physician, who had entered the room unobserved at this juncture.

The apprentice stated Nizza's proposal to him.

"I entirely approve of the plan," observed the Doctor; "it will obviate many difficulties. I have just received a message from Mr. Bloundel by Dallison the porter, to say he intends sending Blaize with you. I will therefore provide pillions for the horses, so that the whole party can be accommodated."

He then sat down and wrote out minute instructions for Amabel's treatment, and delivering the paper to Leonard, desired him to give it to the housekeeper at Ashdown Park.

"Heaven only knows what the result of all this will be!" he exclaimed. "But nothing must be neglected."

Leonard promised that his advice should be scrupulously attended to; and the discourse then turning to Nizza's father, she expressed the utmost anxiety to see him before she set out.

Hodges readily assented. "Your father has been discharged as cured from the pest-house," he said, "and is lodged at a cottage, kept by my old nurse, Dame Lucas, just without the walls, near Moorgate. I will send for him."

"On no account," replied Nizza. "I will go to him myself."

"As you please," returned Hodges. "Leonard shall accompany you. You will easily find the cottage. It is about two hundred yards beyond the gate, on the right, near the old dog-houses."

"I know the spot perfectly," rejoined Leonard.

"I would recommend you to put on a mask," observed the Doctor to Nizza; "it may protect you from molestation. I will find you one below."

Leading the way to a lower room, he opened

a drawer, and producing a small loo mask, gave it her. The youthful pair then quitted the house, Nizza taking Bell under her arm, as she intended leaving her with her father. The necessity of the Doctor's caution was speedily manifested, for as they crossed Saint Paul's churchyard they encountered Pillichody, who, glancing inquisitively at Nizza, seemed disposed to push his inquiries further by attempting to take off her mask, but the fierce look of the apprentice, who grasped his staff in a menacing manner, induced him to abandon his purpose. He, however, followed them along Cheapside, and would have continued the pursuit along the Old Jewry, if Leonard had not come to a halt, and awaited his approach. He then took to his heels, and did not again make his appearance.

As they reached the open fields and slackened their pace, Leonard deemed it prudent to prepare his companion for her interview with her father by mentioning the circumstance of the packet, and the important secret which he had stated he had to disclose to her.

"I cannot tell what the secret can relate to, unless it is to my mother," rejoined Nizza. "She died, I believe, when I was an infant.

At all events, I never remember seeing her, and I have remarked that my father is averse to talking about her. But I will now question him. I have reason to think this piece of gold," and she produced the amulet, " is in some way or other connected with the mystery."

And she then explained to Leonard all that had occurred in the vault when the coin had been shown to Judith Malmayns, describing the the nurse's singular look, and her father's subsequent anger.

By this time, they had entered a narrow footpath leading across the fields in the direction of a little nest of cottages, and pursuing it, they came to a garden gate. Opening it, they beheld the piper seated beneath a little porch, covered with eglantine and roses. He was playing a few notes on his pipe, but stopped on hearing their approach. Bell, who had been put to the ground by Nizza, ran barking gleefully towards him. Uttering a joyful exclamation, the piper stretched out his arms, and the next moment enfolded his daughter in a strict embrace. Leonard remained at the gate till the first transports of their meeting were over, and then advanced slowly towards them.

"Whose footsteps are those?" inquired the piper.

Nizza explained.

"Ah, is it Leonard Holt?" exclaimed the piper, extending his hand to the apprentice. "You are heartily welcome," he added; "and I am glad to find you with Nizza. It is no secret to me that she likes you. She has been an excellent daughter, and will make an excellent wife. He who weds her will obtain a greater treasure than he expects."

"Not than he expects," said Leonard.

"Ay, than he expects," reiterated the piper. "You will one day find out that I speak the truth."

Leonard looked at Nizza, who was blushing deeply at her father's remark. She understood him.

"Father," she said, "I understand you have a secret of importance to disclose to me. I am about to make a long journey to-morrow, and may not return for some time. At this uncertain season, when those who part know not that they shall meet again, nothing of this sort ought to be withheld."

"You cannot know it while I live," replied

the piper, "but I will take such precautions that, if anything happens to me, it shall be certainly revealed to you."

"I am satisfied," she rejoined, "and will only ask you one further question, and I beseech you to answer it. Does this amulet refer to the secret?"

"It does," replied her father sullenly; "and now let the subject be dropped."

He then led the way into the cottage. The good old dame who kept it, on learning who they were, and that they were sent by Doctor Hodges, gave them a hearty welcome, and placed refreshments before them. Leonard commented upon the extreme neatness of the abode and its healthful situation, and expressed a hope that it might not be visited by the plague.

"I trust it will not," rejoined the old woman, shaking her head; "but when I hear the doleful bell at night—when I catch a glimpse of the fatal cart,—or look towards yon dreadful place," and she pointed in the direction of the plague-pit, which lay only a few hundred yards to the west of her habitation,—"I am reminded that the scourge is not far off, and that it must needs reach me ere long."

"Have no fear, Dame Lucas," said the piper; "you see it has pleased a merciful Providence to spare the lives of myself, my child, and this young man. And if you should be attacked, the same beneficent being may preserve you in like manner."

"The Lord's will be done!" rejoined Dame Lucas. "I know I shall be well attended to by Doctor Hodges. I nursed him when he was an infant, and he has been like a son to me. Bless his kind heart!" she exclaimed, her eyes filling with tears of gratitude, "there is not his like in London."

"Always excepting my master," observed Leonard, with a smile at her enthusiasm.

"I except no one," rejoined Dame Lucas. "A worthier man never lived than Doctor Hodges. If I die of the plague," she continued, "he has promised not to let me be thrown into that horrible pit, — ough! — but to bury me in my garden, beneath the old apple-tree."

"And he will keep his word, dame, I am sure," replied Leonard. "I would recommend you, however, as the best antidote against the plague, to keep yourself constantly employed, and to indulge as few gloomy notions as possible."

"I am seldom melancholy, and still more seldom idle," replied the good dame. "But despondency will steal on me sometimes, especially when the dead-cart passes and I think what it contains."

While this conversation was going forward, Nizza and the piper withdrew into an inner room, where they remained closeted together for some time. On their re-appearance, Nizza said she was ready to depart, and taking an affectionate farewell of her father, and committing Bell to his charge she quitted the cottage with the apprentice.

Evening was now advancing, and the sun was setting with the gorgeousness already described as peculiar to this fatal period. Filled with the pleasing melancholy inspired by the hour, they walked on in silence. They had not proceeded far, when they observed a man crossing the field with a bundle in his arms. Suddenly, he staggered and fell. Seeing he did not stir, and guessing what was the matter, Leonard ran towards him to offer him assistance. He found him lying in the grass with his left hand fixed against his heart. He groaned heavily, and his features were convulsed with pain. Near him

lay the body of a beautiful little girl, with long fair hair, and finely formed features, though now disfigured by purple blotches, proclaiming the disorder of which she had perished. She was apparently about ten years old, and was partially covered by a linen cloth. The man, whose features bore a marked resemblance to those of the child, was evidently from his attire above the middle rank. His frame was athletic, and as he was scarcely past the prime of life, the irresistible power of the disease, which could in one instant prostrate strength like his, was terribly attested.

"Alas!" he cried, addressing the apprentice, "I was about to convey the remains of my poor child to the plague pit. But I have been unable to accomplish my purpose. I hoped she would have escaped the polluting touch of those loathly attendants on the dead-cart."

"She *shall* escape it," replied Leonard, "If you wish it, I will carry her to the pit myself."

"The blessing of a dying man rest on your head," cried the sufferer, "your charitable action will not pass unrequited."

With this, despite the agony he endured, he

dragged himself to his child, kissed her cold lips, smoothed her fair tresses, and covered the body carefully with the cloth. He then delivered it to Leonard, who received it tenderly, and calling to Nizza Macascree, who had witnessed the scene at a little distance, and was deeply affected by it, to await his return, ran towards the plague-pit. Arrived there, he placed his little burthen at the brink of the excavation, and kneeling beside it, uttered a short prayer inspired by the occasion. He then tore his handkerchief into strips, and tying them together, lowered the body gently down. Throwing a little earth over it, he hastened to the sick man, and told him what he had done. A smile of satisfaction illumined the sufferer's countenance, and holding out his hand, on which a valuable ring glistened, he said, "Take it — it is but a poor reward for the service you have rendered me;— nay, take it," he added, seeing that the apprentice hesitated, "others will not be so scrupulous."

Unable to gainsay the remark, Leonard took the ring from his finger, and placed it on his own. At this moment, the sick man's gaze fell upon Nizza, who stood at a little distance

from him. He started, and made an effort to clear his vision.

"Do my eyes deceive me?" he cried; "or is a female standing there?"

"You are not deceived," replied Leonard.

"Let her come near me, in heaven's name!" cried the sick man, staring at her as if his eyes would start from their sockets. "Who are you?" he continued, as Nizza approached.

"I am called Nizza Macascree, and am the daughter of a poor piper," she replied.

"Ah!" exclaimed the sick man, with a look of deep disappointment. "The resemblance is wonderful! And yet it cannot be. My brain is bewildered."

"Whom does she resemble?" asked Leonard, eagerly.

"One very dear to me," replied the sick man, with an expression of remorse and anguish, "one I would not think of now." And he buried his face in the grass.

"Is there aught more I can do for you?" inquired Leonard, after a pause.

"No," replied the sick man; "I have done with the world. With that child, the last tie that bound me to it was snapped. I now only wish to die."

"Do not give way thus," replied Leonard; "a short time ago, my condition was as apparently hopeless as your own, and you see I am now perfectly recovered."

"You had something to live for — something to love," groaned the sick man. "All I lived for, all I loved are gone."

"Be comforted, sir," said Nizza, in a commiserating tone. "Much happiness may yet be in store for you."

"That voice!" exclaimed the sick man, with a look denoting the approach of delirium, "it must be my Isabella. Oh! forgive me! sweet injured saint forgive me!"

"Your presence evidently distresses him," said Leonard. "Let us hasten for assistance. Your name, sir?" he added, to the sick man.

"Why should you seek to know it," replied the other. "No tombstone will be placed over the plague-pit."

"Not a moment must be lost if you would save him," cried Nizza.

"You are right," replied Leonard. "Let us fly to the nearest apothecary's."

Accordingly, they set off at a quick pace towards Moorgate. Just as they reached it,

they heard the bell ring, and saw the dead-cart approaching. Shrinking back while it passed, they ran on till they came to an apothecary's shop, where Leonard, describing the state of the sick man, by his entreaties induced the master of the establishment and one of his assistants to accompany him. Leaving Nizza in the shop, he then retraced his steps with his companions. The sick man was lying where he had left him, but perfectly insensible. On searching his pockets, a purse of money was found, but neither letter nor tablet to tell who he was. Leonard offered the purse to the apothecary, but the latter declined it, and desired his assistant, who had brought a barrow with him, to place the sick man within it, and convey him to the pest-house.

"He will be better cared for there than if I were to take charge of him," he observed. "As to the money, you can return it if he recovers. If not, it of right belongs to you."

Seeing that remonstrance would be useless, Leonard did not attempt it, and while the assistant wheeled away the sick man, he returned with the apothecary to his dwelling. Thanking him for his kindness, he then hastened

with Nizza Macascree to Great Knight-rider Street. He related to the Doctor all that had occurred, and showed him the ring. Hodges listened to the recital with great attention, and at its close said, "This is a very singular affair, and excites my curiosity greatly. I will go to the pest-house and see the sick man to-morrow. And now we will proceed to supper; and then you had better retire to rest, for you will have to be astir before daybreak. All is in readiness for the journey."

The last night (for such she considered it,) spent by Amabel in her father's dwelling, was passed in the kindliest interchanges of affection. Mr. Bloundel had much ado to maintain his firmness, and ever anon, in spite of his efforts, his labouring bosom and faltering tones proclaimed the struggle within. He sat beside his daughter with her thin fingers clasped in his, and spoke to her on every consolatory topic that suggested itself. Their discourse, however, insensibly took a serious turn, and the grocer became fully convinced that his daughter was not merely reconciled to the early death that to all appearance awaited her, but wishful for it. He found too, to his inexpressible grief, that

the sense of the Earl of Rochester's treachery, combined with her own indiscretion, and the consequences that might have attended it, had sank deep into her heart, and produced the present sad result.

Mrs. Bloundel, it will scarcely be supposed, could support herself so well as her husband, but when any paroxysm of grief approached, she rushed out of the room, and gave vent to her affliction alone. All the rest of the family were present, and were equally distressed. But what most strongly affected Amabel was a simple, natural remark of little Christiana, who fixing her tearful gaze on her, entreated her "to come back soon."

Weak as she was, Amabel took the child upon her knee, and said to her, "I am going a long journey, Christiana, and, perhaps, may never come back. But if you attend to what your father says to you, if you never omit, morning and evening, to implore the blessing of heaven, we shall meet again."

"I understand what you mean, sister," said Christiana. "The place you are going to is the grave."

"You have guessed rightly, Christiana," re-

joined Amabel, solemnly. "Do not forget my last words to you, and when you are grown into a woman, think upon the poor sister who loved you tenderly."

"I shall always think of you," said Christiana, clasping her arms round her sister's neck. "Oh! I wish I could go to the grave instead of you!"

Amabel pressed her to her bosom, and in a broken voice murmured a blessing over her.

Mr. Bloundel here thought it necessary to interfere, and taking the weeping child in his arms, carried her into the adjoining apartment.

Soon after this, the household were summoned to prayers, and as the grocer poured forth an address to heaven for the preservation of his daughter, all earnestly joined in the supplication. Their devotions ended, Amabel took leave of her brothers, and the parting might have been painfully prolonged, but for the interposition of her father. The last and severest trial was at hand. She had now to part from her mother—from whom, except on the occasion of her flight with the Earl of Rochester — she had never yet been separated. She had now to part with her, in all proba-

bility, for ever. It was a heart-breaking reflection to both. Knowing it would only renew their affliction, and perhaps unfit Amabel for the journey, Mr. Bloundel had prevailed upon his wife not to see her in the morning. The moment had, therefore, arrived when they were to bid each other farewell. The anguish displayed in his wife's countenance was too much for the grocer, and he covered his face with his hands. He heard her approach Amabel — he listened to their mutual sobs — to their last embrace. It was succeeded by a stifled cry, and uncovering his face at the sound, he sprang to his feet just in time to receive his swooning wife in his arms.

CHAPTER VI.

THE DEPARTURE.

It struck four by Saint Paul's as Doctor Hodges, accompanied by Leonard and Nizza Macascree, issued from his dwelling and proceeded towards Wood Street. The party was followed by a man leading a couple of horses, equipped with pillions, and furnished with saddle-bags, partly filled with the scanty luggage which the apprentice and the piper's daughter took with them. A slight haze, indicative of the intense heat about to follow, hung round the lower part of the cathedral, but its topmost pinnacles glittered in the beams of the newly-risen sun. As Leonard gazed at the central tower, he descried Solomon Eagle on its summit, and pointed him out to Hodges. Motioning the apprentice in a manner that could not be misundertood, to halt, the en-

thusiast vanished, and in another moment appeared upon the roof, and descended to the battlements overlooking the spot where the little party stood. This was at the north-west corner of the cathedral, at a short distance from the portico. The enthusiast had a small sack in his hand, and calling to Nizza Macascree to take it, flung it to the ground. The ringing sound which it made on its fall proved that it contained gold or silver, while its size showed that the amount must be considerable. Nizza looked at it in astonishment, but did not offer to touch it.

"Take it!" thundered Solomon Eagle; "it is your dowry." And perceiving she hesitated to comply with the injunction, he shouted to Leonard. "Give it her. I have no use for gold. May it make you and her happy!"

"I know not where he can have obtained this money," observed Hodges, "but I am sure in no unlawful manner, and I, therefore, counsel Nizza to accept the boon. It may be of the greatest use to her at some future time."

His scruples being thus overcome, Leonard took the sack, and placed it in one of the saddle-bags.

"You can examine it at your leisure," remarked Hodges to Nizza. "We have no more time to lose."

Solomon Eagle, meanwhile, expressed his satisfaction at the apprentice's compliance by his gestures, and waving his staff round his head, pointed towards the west of the city, as if inquiring whether that was the route they meant to take. Leonard nodded an affirmative; and the enthusiast, spreading out his arms and pronouncing an audible benediction over them, they resumed their course. The streets were silent and deserted, except by the watchmen stationed at the infected dwellings, and a few sick persons stretched on the steps of some of the better habitations. In order to avoid coming in contact with these miserable creatures the party, with the exception of Doctor Hodges, kept in the middle of the road. Attracted by the piteous exclamations of the sufferers, Doctor Hodges, ever and anon, humanely paused to speak to them; and he promised one poor woman, who was suckling an infant, to visit her on his return.

"I have no hopes of saving her," he observed to Leonard, "but I may preserve her

child. There is an establishment in Aldgate for infants whose mothers have died of the plague, where more than a hundred little creatures are suckled by she-goats, and it is wonderful how well they thrive under their nurses. If I can induce this poor woman to part with her child, I will send it thither."

Just then, their attention was arrested by the sudden opening of a casement, and a middle-aged woman, wringing her hands, cried, with a look of unutterable anguish and despair, —"Pray for us, good people! pray for us!"

"We *do* pray for you, my poor soul!" rejoined Hodges, "as well as for all who are similarly afflicted. What sick have you within?"

"There were ten yesterday," replied the woman. "Two have died in the night — my husband and my eldest son, — and there are eight others whose recovery is hopeless. Pray for us! As you hope to be spared yourselves, pray for us!" And with a lamentable cry, she closed the casement.

Familiarised as all who heard her were with spectacles of horror and tales of woe, they could not listen to this sad recital, nor look upon her distracted countenance, without the deepest

commiseration. Other sights had previously affected them, but not in the same degree. Around the little conduit standing in front of the Old 'Change at the western extremity of Cheapside, were three lazars laving their sores in the water; while in the short space between this spot and Wood Street, Leonard counted upwards of twenty doors marked with the fatal red cross, and bearing upon them the sad inscription, "Lord have mercy upon us!"

A few minutes' walking brought them to the grocer's habitation, and on reaching it, they found that Blaize had already descended. He was capering about the street with joy at his restoration to freedom.

"Mistress Amabel will make her appearance in a few minutes," he said to Leonard. "Our master is with her, and is getting all ready for her departure. I have not come unprovided with medicine," he added, to Doctor Hodges. "I have got a bottle of plague-water in one pocket and a phial of vinegar in the other. Besides these, I have a small pot of Mayerne's electuary in my bag, another of the grand antipestilential confection, and a fourth of the infallible antidote which I bought of the cele-

brated Greek physician, Doctor Constantine Rhodocanaceis, at his shop near the Three Kings Inn, in Southampton Buildings. I dare say you have heard of him?"

"I *have* heard of the quack," replied Hodges. "His end was a just retribution for the tricks he practised on his dupes. In spite of his infallible antidote, he was carried off by the scourge. But what else have you got?"

"Only a few trifles," replied Blaize, with a chop-fallen look. "Patience has made me a pomander-ball composed of angelica, rue, zedoary, camphor, wax, and laudanum, which I have hung round my neck with a string. Then I have got a good sized box of rufuses, and have swallowed three of them preparatory to the journey."

"A proper precaution," observed Hodges with a smile.

"This is not all," replied Blaize. "By my mother's advice, I have eaten twenty leaves of rue, two roasted figs, and two pickled walnuts for breakfast, washing them down with an ale posset, with pimpernel seethed in it."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Hodges. "You must be in a pretty condition for a journey. But

how could you bear to part with your mother and Patience?"

"The parting from Patience *was* heart-breaking," replied Blaize, taking out his handkerchief and applying it to his eyes. "We sat up half the night together, and I felt so much overcome that I began to waver in my resolution of departing. I am glad I did not give way now," he added in a more sprightly tone. "Fresh air and bright sunshine are very different things from the close rooms in that dark house."

"You must not forget that you were there free from the contagion," rejoined Hodges; "while you are here exposed to its assaults."

"True," replied Blaize; "that makes a vast difference. I almost wish I was back again."

"It is too late to think of returning," said Hodges. "Mount your horse, and I will assist Nizza into the pillion."

By the time that Blaize, who was but an indifferent horseman, had got into the saddle, and Nizza had taken her place behind him, the window opened, and Mr. Blondel appeared at it.

Amabel had only retired to rest for a few hours during the night. When left to herself in her chamber, she continued to pray till ex-

haustion compelled her to seek some repose. Arising about two o'clock, she employed herself for more than an hour in further devotion, and then took a last survey of every object in the room. She had occupied it from her childhood, and as she opened drawer after drawer, and cupboard after cupboard, and examined their contents, each article recalled some circumstance connected with the past, and brought back a train of long-forgotten emotions. While she was thus engaged, Patience tapped at the door, and was instantly admitted. The tender-hearted kitchen-maid assisted her to dress, and to put together some few articles omitted to be packed by her mother. During this employment, she shed abundance of tears, and Amabel's efforts to console her only made matters worse. Poor Patience was forced, at last, to sit down and indulge a hearty fit of crying, after which she felt considerably relieved. As soon as she was sufficiently recovered to be able to speak, she observed to Amabel—"Pardon what I am about to say to you, my dear young mistress, but I cannot help thinking that the real seat of your disease is in the heart."

A slight blush overspread Amabel's pale features, but she made no answer.

"I see I am right," continued Patience, "and indeed I have long suspected it. Let me entreat you therefore, dear young lady, not to sacrifice yourself. Only say the word, and I will find means of making your retreat known to the Earl of Rochester. Blaize is devoted to you, and will do anything you bid him. I cannot wonder you fret after so handsome — so captivating a man as the Earl, especially when you are worried to death to marry a common apprentice like Leonard Holt, who is not fit to hold a candle to your noble admirer. Ah! we women can never blind ourselves to the advantages of rank and appearance. We are too good judges for that. I hope you will soon be restored to your lover, and that the happiness you will enjoy will make amends for all the misery you have endured."

"Patience," said Amabel, whose cheek, as the other spoke, had returned to its original paleness. "Patience," she said, gravely, but kindly, "I have suffered you to proceed too far without interruption, and must correct the

very serious error into which you have fallen. I am so far from pining for an interview with the Earl of Rochester, that nothing in the world should induce me to see him again. I have loved him deeply," she continued in a tremulous tone, "nay, I will not attempt to disguise that I feel strongly towards him still, while I will also freely confess that his conduct towards me has so preyed upon my spirits that it has impaired, perhaps destroyed my health. In spite of this, I cannot sufficiently rejoice that I have escaped the Earl's snares,— I cannot be sufficiently thankful to the merciful Being, who, while he has thought fit to chastise me, has preserved me from utter ruin."

"Since you are of this mind," returned Patience, in a tone of incredulity, "you are more to be rejoiced with, than pitied. But we are not overheard," she added, almost in a whisper, and glancing towards the door. "You may entirely confide in me. The time is arrived when you can escape to your lover."

"No more of this," rejoined Amabel, severely, "or I shall command you to leave the room."

"This is nothing more than pique," thought Patience. "We women are all hypocrites, even

to ourselves. I will serve her whether she will or not. She *shall* see the Earl. I hope there is no harm in wishing you may be happy with Leonard Holt," she added, aloud. "*He* will make you a capital husband."

"That subject is equally disagreeable — equally painful to me," said Amabel.

"I had better hold my tongue altogether," rejoined Patience, somewhat pertly. "Whatever I say seems to be wrong. It won't prevent me from doing as I would be done by," she added to herself.

Amabel's preparations finished, she dismissed Patience to whom she gave some few slight remembrances, and was soon afterwards joined by her father. They passed half an hour together, as on the former night in serious and devout conversation, after which, Mr. Bloundel left her for a few minutes to let down Blaize. On his return, he tenderly embraced her, and led her into the passage. They had not advanced many steps, when Mrs. Bloundel rushed forth to meet them. She was in her night-dress, and seemed overwhelmed with affliction.

"How is this, Honora?" cried her husband, in a severe tone. "You promised me you

would see Amabel no more. You will only distress her."

"I could not let her go thus," cried Mrs. Bloundel, "I was listening at my chamber-door to hear her depart, and when I caught the sound of her footsteps, I could no longer control myself." So saying, she rushed to her daughter and clasped her in her arms.

Affectionately returning her mother's embrace, Amabel gave her hand to her father, who conducted her to the little room overlooking the street. Nothing more, except a deep and passionate look, was exchanged between them. Both repressed their emotion, and though the heart of each was bursting, neither shed a tear. At that moment, and for the first time, they greatly resembled each other, and this was not surprising, for intense emotion, whether of grief or joy, will bring out lines in the features, that lie hidden at other times. Without a word, Mr. Bloundel busied himself in arranging the pulley, and calling to those below, to prepare for Amabel's descent, again embraced her, kissed her pale brow, and placing her carefully in the basket, lowered her slowly to the ground. She was received in safety by

Leonard, who carried her in his arms, and placed her on the pillion. The pulley was then drawn up, and her luggage lowered by Mr. Bloundel, and placed in the saddlebags by the apprentice. Every one saw the necessity of terminating this painful scene. A kindly farewell was taken of Hodges. Amabel waved her hand to her father, when at this moment Patience appeared at the window, and calling to Blaize, threw a little package tied in a handkerchief to him. Doctor Hodges took up the parcel and gave it to the porter, who, untying the handkerchief, glanced at a note it enclosed, and striking his horse with his stick, dashed off towards Cheapside.

"Pursue him," cried Amabel to Leonard, "he is flying to the Earl of Rochester."

The intimation was sufficient for the apprentice. Urging his horse into a quick pace, he came up with the fugitive just as he had reached Cheapside. Blaize's mad career had been checked by Nizza Macascree, who seizing the bridle, stopped the steed. Leonard, who was armed with a heavy riding-whip, applied it unsparingly to Blaize's shoulders.

"Entreat him to hold his hand, dear, good Mistress Amabel," cried the porter; "it was

for your sake alone I made this rash attempt. Patience told me you were dying to see the Earl of Rochester, and made me promise I would ride to Whitehall to acquaint his lordship whither you were going. Here is her letter which I was about to deliver." And as he spoke, he handed her the note which was tied with a piece of packthread, and directed in strange and almost illegible characters.

"Do not hurt him more," said Amabel; "he was not aware of the mischief he was about to commit. And learn from me, Blaize, that, so far from desiring to see the Earl of Rochester, all my anxiety is to avoid him."

"If I had known that," returned the porter, "I would not have stirred a step. But Patience assured me the contrary."

By this time, Doctor Hodges had come up, and an explanation ensued. It was agreed, however, that it would be better not to alarm Mr. Bloundel, but to attribute the porter's sudden flight to mismanagement of his steed. Accordingly, they returned to the residence of the grocer, who was anxiously looking out for them; and after a brief delay, during which the saddle-bags were again examined and se-

cured, they departed. Mr. Bloundel looked wistfully after his daughter, and she returned his gaze as long as her blinding eyes would permit her. So unwonted was the sound of horses' feet at this period, that many a melancholy face appeared at the window to gaze at them as they rode by, and Nizza Macascree shuddered as she witnessed the envious glances cast after them by these poor captives. As to Blaize, when they got into Cheapside, he was so terrified by the dismal evidences of the pestilence that met him at every turn, that he could scarcely keep his seat, and it was not until he had drenched himself and his companion with vinegar, and stuffed his mouth with myrrh and zedoary that he felt anything like composure.

On approaching Newgate Market, they found it entirely deserted. Most of the stalls were removed, the shops closed, and the window-shutters nailed up. It was never, in fact, used at all, except by a few countrywomen and higglers, who ventured thither on certain days of the week to sell fresh eggs, butter, poultry, and such commodities. The manner of sale was this. The article disposed of was placed on a flag on one side of the market, near which stood

a pump and a trough of water. The vender then retired, while the purchaser approached, took the article, and put its price into the water, whence it was removed when supposed to be sufficiently purified.

As the party passed Grey Friars, the tramp of their horses was mistaken for the dead-cart, and a door was suddenly opened and a corpse brought forth. Leonard would have avoided the spectacle had it been possible, but they were now close to Newgate, where they were detained for a few minutes at the gate, while their bills-of-health were examined and countersigned by the officer stationed there. During this pause, Leonard glanced at the grated windows of the prison, the debtor's side of which fronted the street. But not a single face was to be seen. In fact, as has already been stated, the prison was shut up.

The gate was now opened to them, and descending Snow Hill, they entered a region completely devastated by the pestilence. So saddening was the sight, that Leonard involuntarily quickened his horse's pace, resolved to get out of this forlorn district as speedily as possible. He was, however, stopped by an un-

expected and fearful impediment. When within a short distance of Holborn Bridge, he observed on the further side of it a large black vehicle, and, unable to make out what it was, though a a fearful suspicion crossed him, slackened his pace. A nearer approach showed him that it was the pest-cart, filled with its charnel load. The horse was in the shafts, and was standing quite still. Rising in his stirrups to obtain a better view, Leonard perceived that the driver was lying on the ground at a little distance from the cart, in an attitude that proclaimed he had been suddenly seized by the pestilence, and had probably just expired.

Not choosing to incur the risk of passing this contagious load, Leonard retraced his course as far as Holborn Conduit, then turning into Seacoal Lane, and making the best of his way to Fleet Bridge, crossed it, and entered the great thoroughfare with which it communicated. He had not proceeded far when he encountered a small party of the watch, to whom he showed his certificate, and recounted the fate of the driver of the dead-cart. At Temple Bar, he was again obliged to exhibit his passports, and, while there detained, he observed

three other horsemen riding towards them from the further end of Fleet Street.

Though much alarmed by the sight, Leonard did not communicate his apprehensions to his companions, but as soon as the guard allowed him to pass, called out to Blaize to follow him, and urging his horse to a quick pace, dashed up Drury Lane. A few minutes hard riding, during which nothing occurred to give the apprentice further uneasiness, brought them to a road skirting the open fields in which a pest-house had just been built by the chivalrous nobleman, whose habitation, in Berkshire, they were about to visit. With a courage and devotion that redound more to his honour than the brilliant qualities that won him so high a reputation in the court and in the field, Lord Craven not merely provided the present receptacle for the sick, but remained in London during the whole continuance of the dreadful visitation; "braving," says Pennant, "the fury of the pestilence with the same coolness that he fought the battles of his beloved mistress, Elizabeth, titular Queen of Bohemia, or mounted the tremendous breach of Creutznach." The spot where this asylum was built, and which

is the present site of Golden Square, retained nearly half a century afterwards the name of the Pest-house Fields. Leonard had already been made acquainted by Doctor Hodges, with the Earl's generous devotion to the public welfare, and warmly commenting upon it, he pointed out the structure to Amabel. But the speed at which she was borne along did not allow her time to bestow more than a hasty glance at it. On gaining Hyde Park Corner, the apprentice cast a look backwards, and his apprehensions were revived by perceiving the three horsemen again in view, and evidently using their utmost exertions to come up with them.

While Leonard was hesitating whether he should make known their danger to Amabel, he perceived Solomon Eagle dart from behind a wall on the left of the road, and plant himself in the direct course of their pursuers, and he involuntarily drew in the rein to see what would ensue. In another moment, the horsemen, who were advancing at full gallop,—and whom Leonard now recognized as the Earl of Rochester, Pillichody, and Sir Paul Parravicin, — had approached within a few yards of the enthusiast,

and threatened to ride over him, if he did not get out of the way. Seeing, however, that he did not offer to move, they opened on either side of him, and were passing swiftly by, when, with infinite dexterity, he caught hold of the bridle of Rochester's steed, and checking him, seized the Earl by the leg, and threw him to the ground.

Sir Paul Parravicin pulled up as soon as he could, and, drawing his sword, rode back to assist his friend, and punish the aggressor. But the enthusiast, nothing daunted, met him in full career, and, suddenly lifting up his arms, uttered a loud cry, which so startled the knight's high-spirited horse, that it reared and flung him. All this was the work of a few seconds. Pillichody had been borne forward by the impetuosity of his steed to within a short distance of the apprentice, and seeing the fate of his companions, and not liking Leonard's menacing gestures, he clapped spurs into his horse, and rode up Park-lane.

Overjoyed at his unexpected deliverance, Leonard, whose attention had been completely engrossed by what was passing, now ventured to look at Amabel, and became greatly alarmed

at her appearance. She was as pale as death, except a small scarlet patch on either cheek, which contrasted powerfully with the death-like hue of the rest of her countenance. Her hands convulsively clasped the back of the pillion; her lips were slightly apart; and her eyes fixed upon the prostrate form of the Earl of Rochester. On finding they were pursued, and by whom, her first impulse had been to fling herself from the horse, and to seek safety by flight, but controlling herself, she awaited the result with forced composure, and was now sinking from the exhaustion of the effort.

"Thank heaven! we are safe," cried the apprentice, "but I fear the shock has been too much for you."

"It has," gasped Amabel, falling against his shoulder. "Let us fly — oh! let us fly."

Inexpressibly shocked and alarmed, Leonard twined his left arm round her waist so as to hold her on the steed, for she was utterly unable to support herself, and glancing anxiously at Nizza Macascree, struck off on the right into the road skirting the park, and in the direction of Tyburn, where there was a small inn, at which he hoped to procure assistance. Before

reaching this place, he was beyond description relieved to find that Amabel had so far recovered as to be able to raise her head.

"The deadly faintness is passed," she murmured, "I shall be better soon. But I fear I am too weak to pursue the journey at present."

Leonard spurred on his steed, and in another instant reached Tyburn, and drew up at the little inn. But no assistance could be obtained there. The house was closed; there was a red cross on the door; and a watchman, stationed in front of it, informed him that all the family had died of the plague except the landlord,—"and he will be buried beside them in Paddington churchyard before to-morrow morning," added the man; "for his nurse tells me it is impossible he can survive many hours."

As he spoke, an upper window was opened, and a woman thrusting forth her head, cried, "Poor Master Sandys has just breathed his last. Come in, Philip, and help me to prepare the body for the dead-cart."

"I will be with you in a minute," rejoined the watchman. "You may possibly procure accommodation at the Wheat-sheaf at Pad-

dington," he added to Leonard; "it is but a short distance up the road."

Thanking him for the information, Leonard took the course indicated. He had not proceeded far, when he was alarmed by hearing a piteous cry of "Stop! stop!" proceeding from Blaize; and halting, found that the porter had been so greatly terrified by the watchman's account of the frightful mortality in the poor innkeeper's family, that he had applied to his phial of plague-water, and in pulling it out, had dropped his box of rufuses, and the jar of anti-pestilential confection. He had just ascertained his loss, and wished to go back, but this Nizza Macascree would not permit. Enraged at the delay, Leonard peremptorily ordered the porter to come on; and Blaize, casting a rueful glance at his treasures, which he perceived at a little distance in the middle of the road, was compelled to obey.

At Paddington, another disappointment awaited them. The Wheatsheaf was occupied by two large families, who were flying from the infected city, and no accommodation could be obtained. Leonard looked wistfully at Nizza

Macascree, as if to ascertain what to do, and she was equally perplexed; but the difficulty was relieved by Amabel herself, who said she felt much better, and able to proceed a little further. "Do not return to London," she continued, with great earnestness. "I would rather die on the road than go home again. Some cottage will receive us. If not, I can rest for a short time in the fields."

Thinking it best to comply, Leonard proceeded along the Harrow-road. Soon after crossing Paddington Green, he overtook a little train of fugitives driving a cart filled with children and laden with luggage. Further on, as he surveyed the beautiful meadows, stretching out on either side of him, he perceived a line of small tents, resembling a gipsy encampment, pitched at a certain distance from each other, and evidently occupied by families who had fled from their homes from fear of infection. This gave a singular character to the prospect. But there were other and far more painful sights on the road, which could not fail to attract attention. For the first half mile, almost at every hundred yards might be seen some sick man, who, unable to proceed further,

had fallen against the hedge-side, and exhibited his sores to move the pity of the passers by. But these supplications were wholly unheeded. Self-preservation was the first object with all, and the travellers, holding handkerchiefs steeped in vinegar to their faces, and averting their heads, passed by on the other side of the way.

The pestilence, it may be remarked, had visited with extraordinary rigour the whole of the higher country at the west and north-west of the metropolis. The charmingly-situated, and, at other seasons, healthful villages of Hampstead and Highgate, suffered severely from the scourge; and it even extended its ravages as far as Harrow-on-the-Hill, which it half depopulated. This will account for the circumstance of a large pest-house being erected in the neighbourhood of Westbourne Green, which the party now approached. Two litters were seen crossing the fields in the direction of the hospital, and this circumstance called Leonard's attention to it. Shudderingly averting his gaze, he quickened his pace, and soon reached a small farm-house on the summit of the hill rising from Kensal Green. Determined to seek a tem-

porary asylum here for Amabel, he opened a gate, and riding into the yard, fortunately met with the owner of the house, a worthy farmer, named Wingfield, to whom he explained her situation. The man at first hesitated, but, on receiving Leonard's solemn assurance that she was free from the plague, consented to receive the whole party.

Assisting Amabel to dismount, Wingfield conveyed her in his arms into the house, and delivered her to his wife, bidding her take care of her. The injunction was scarcely needed. The good dame, who was a middle-aged woman, with pleasing features, which lost none of their interest from being stamped with profound melancholy, gazed at her for a moment fixedly, and then observed in an undertone, but with much emotion, to her husband, "Ah! Robert, how much this sweet creature resembles our poor Sarah!"

"Hush! hush! dame," rejoined her husband, hastily brushing away the moisture that sprung to his eyes; "take her to your chamber, and see that she wants nothing. There is another young woman outside, whom I will send to you."

So saying, he returned to the yard. Meantime, the others had dismounted, and Wingfield, bidding Nizza Macascree go in, led the way to the barn, where the horses were tied up, and fodder placed before them. This done, he conducted his guests to the house, and placing cold meat, bread, and a jug of ale before them, desired them to fall to,—an injunction which Blaize, notwithstanding his previous repast of roasted figs and pickled walnuts, very readily complied with. While they were thus employed, Dame Wingfield made her appearance. She said that the poor creature (meaning Amabel) was too ill to proceed on her journey that day, and begged her husband to allow her to stop till the next morning, when she hoped she would be able to undertake it.

"To-morrow morning, say you, dame?" cried Wingfield; "she may stop till the day after, and the day after that, if you desire it, or she wishes it. Go tell her so."

And as his wife withdrew, well pleased at having obtained her request, Wingfield addressed himself to Leonard, and inquired the cause of Amabel's illness; and as the apprentice saw no necessity for secrecy, and felt ex-

ceedingly grateful for the kind treatment he had experienced, he acquainted him with the chief particulars of her history. The farmer appeared greatly moved by the recital.

"She resembles my poor Sarah very strongly," he said. "My daughter was hurried into an early grave by a villain, who won her affections and betrayed her. She now lies in Willesden churchyard, but her seducer is one of the chief favourites of our profligate monarch."

"Do you mean the Earl of Rochester?" cried Leonard.

"No, no," replied the farmer, whose good-natured countenance had assumed a stern expression. "The villain I mean is worse, if possible, than the Earl. He is called Sir Paul Parravicin."

"Gracious Heaven!" exclaimed Leonard, in astonishment; "what a strange coincidence is this!"

And he then proceeded to relate to Wingfield the persecution which Nizza Macascree had endured from the profligate knight. The farmer listened to his recital with breathless interest, and when it was ended, arose, and taking a hasty turn round the room, halted at the

table, and struck it forcibly with his clenched hand.

"I hope that man will never cross my path," he said, all the blood mounting to his face, and his eye kindling with fury. "As God shall judge me, I will kill him if I meet him."

"Then I hope you never will meet him," observed Leonard. "He has injured you enough already, without putting you out of the pale of Divine mercy."

"These rascals have done us all an injury," observed Blaize. "Patience has never been like herself since Major Pillichody entered my master's dwelling, and made love to her. I feel quite uneasy to think how the little hussy will go on during my absence. She can't get out of the house, that 's one comfort."

"You have mentioned another wretch, who was constantly with Sir Paul," cried Wingfield. "Perdition seize them?"

"Ay, perdition seize them!" echoed Blaize, striking the table in his turn — "especially Major Pillichody."

"Did you ever suspect Sir Paul to be of higher rank than he pretends," asked Leonard.

"No," rejoined Wingfield; "what motive have you for the question?"

Leonard then told him of the inquiries instituted by Doctor Hodges relative to Nizza's retreat, and how they had been baffled. "It is strange," he continued, "that Nizza herself never heard the real name of her persecutor, neither can she tell where the house, to which she was conveyed when in a fainting condition, and from which she was removed when attacked with the plague, is situated."

"It is strange, indeed," observed the farmer, musingly.

Soon after this, Nizza Macascree made her appearance, and informed them that Amabel had fallen into a tranquil slumber, which in all probability would completely renovate her.

"I hope it will," said Wingfield. "But I shall not part with her to-day."

He then entered into conversation with Nizza, and after a little time, proposed to her and Leonard to walk across the fields with him to Willesden, to visit his daughter's grave.

"My wife will take charge of Amabel," he said; "you may safely trust her in her hands."

Leonard could raise no objection, except the

possibility that the Earl of Rochester and his companions might discover their retreat and carry off Amabel in his absence; but after a little reflection, considering this altogether unlikely, he assented, and they set out. A pleasant walk across the fields brought them to the pretty little village of Willesden and its old and beautiful church. They proceeded to the grave of poor Sarah Wingfield, which lay at the east of the church beneath one of the tall elms, and Nizza, as she stood by the rounded sod covering the remains of the unfortunate girl, could not restrain her tears.

"This might have been my own fate," she said. "What an escape I have had!"

"I did not bring you here to read you a lesson," said Wingfield, in a tone of deep emotion, "but because you, who know the temptation to which the poor creature who lies there was exposed, will pity her. Not alone did remorse for her conduct prey upon her spirits,—not alone did she suffer from self-reproach,—but the scoffs and jeers of her sex, who never forgive an erring sister, broke her heart. She is now, however, beyond the reach of human malice, and, I trust, at peace."

As he said this, he walked away to hide his emotion, and presently afterwards rejoining them, they quitted the churchyard together.

As they re-crossed the fields, Wingfield observed two men digging a hole in the ground, and guessing their object, paused for a few minutes to watch them. Having thrown out the earth to the depth of a couple of feet, one of them took a long hooked pole, and attaching it to the body of a victim to the pestilence, who had wandered into the fields and died there, dragged it towards the pit. As soon as the corpse was pushed into its narrow receptacle, the clay was shovelled over it, and trodden down.

"This is a sad mode of burial for a Christian," observed Wingfield. "But it would not do to leave an infected body to rot in the fields and spread the contagion."

"Such a grave is better than the plague-pit," rejoined Leonard, recalling the frightful scenes he had witnessed there.

On reaching Wingfield's dwelling, they found from the good dame, that Amabel had awakened from her slumber greatly refreshed; but she gave it as her opinion that she had better re-

main undisturbed. Accordingly, no one went into the room to her except Nizza Macascree. A substantial dinner was provided for his guests by the hospitable farmer; and Blaize, who had been for some time confined to salt provisions at his master's house, did ample justice to the fresh meat and vegetables.

The meal over, Leonard, who felt exceedingly curious to learn what had become of the mysterious stranger whose child he had carried to the plague-pit, and who had appeared so strangely interested in Nizza Macascree, determined to walk to the pest-house in Finsbury-fields, and inquire after him. On communicating his intention to his host, Wingfield would have dissuaded him, but as Leonard affirmed he had no fear of infection, he desisted from the attempt. Just as the apprentice was starting, Blaize came up to him and said,—"Leonard, I have a great curiosity to see a pest-house, and should like to go with you, if you will let me."

The apprentice stared at him in astonishment.

"You will never dare to enter it," he said.

"I will go wherever you go," replied the

porter, with a confidence mainly inspired by the hospitable farmer's strong ale.

"We shall see," replied Leonard. "I shall keep you to your word."

In less than an hour, they reached Marylebone-fields (now the Regent's-park), and crossing them, entered a lane, running in pretty nearly the same direction as the present New-road. It brought them to Clerkenwell, whence they proceeded to Finsbury-fields, and soon came in sight of the pest-house. When Blaize found himself so near this dreaded asylum, all his courage vanished.

"I would certainly enter the pest-house with you," he said to Leonard, "but I have used up all my vinegar, and you know I lost my box of rufuses and the pot of anti-pestilential confection this morning."

"That excuse shall not serve your turn," replied Leonard. "You can get plenty of vinegar and plague medicine in the pest-house."

"But I have no money to pay for them," rejoined Blaize.

"I will lend you some," said Leonard, placing a few pieces in his hand. "Now, come along."

Blaize would fain have run away, but afraid of incurring the apprentice's anger, he walked tremblingly after him. They entered the garden-gate, and soon reached the principal door, which, as usual, stood open. Scarcely able to support himself, the porter tottered into the large room; but as he cast his eyes around, and beheld the miserable occupants of the pallets, and heard their cries and groans, he was so scared that he could not move another step, but stood like one transfixed with terror. Paying little attention to him, Leonard walked forward, and at the further extremity of the chamber found the young chirurgeon whom he had formerly seen, and, describing the stranger, inquired where he was placed.

"The person you allude to has been removed," returned the chirurgeon. "Doctor Hodges visited him this morning, and had him conveyed to his own dwelling."

"Was he sensible at the time?" asked the apprentice.

"I think not," replied the chirurgeon; "but the Doctor appeared to recognize in him an old friend, though I did not hear him mention his

name; and it was on that account, I conclude, that he had him removed."

"Is he likely to recover?" asked Leonard, whose curiosity was aroused by what he heard.

"That is impossible to say," replied the young man. "But he cannot be in better hands than those of Doctor Hodges."

Leonard perfectly concurred with him, and after a few minutes further conversation, turned to depart. Not seeing Blaize, he concluded he had gone forth, and expected to find him in the garden, or, at all events, in the field adjoining. But he was nowhere to be seen. While wondering what had become of him, Leonard heard a loud cry, in the voice of the porter, issuing from the barn, which, as has already been stated, had been converted into a receptacle for the sick; and hurrying thither, he found Blaize in the hands of two stout assistants, who had stripped him of his clothes, and were tying him down to a pallet. On seeing Leonard, Blaize implored him to deliver him from the hands of his persecutors; and the apprentice assuring the assistants that the poor fellow was perfectly free from infection, they liberated him.

It appeared, on inquiry, that Blaize had fallen against one of the pallets in a state almost of insensibility, and the two assistants, chancing to pass at the time, and taking him for a plague patient, had conveyed him to the barn. On reaching it, he recovered, and besought them to set him free, but they paid no attention to his cries, and proceeded to strip him, and bind him to the bed, as before related.

Thus released, the porter lost no time in dressing himself; and Leonard, to allay his terrors, had a strong dose of anti-pestilential elixir administered to him. After which, having procured him a box of rufuses, and a phial of plague-water, Blaize shook off his apprehension, and they set out at a brisk pace for Kensal Green.

CHAPTER VII.

THE JOURNEY.

Blaize was destined to experience a second fright. It has been mentioned that the infected were sometimes seized with a rabid desire of communicating the disorder to such as had not been attacked by it; and as the pair were making the best of their way along the Harrow road, a poor lazar who was lying against the hedge side, and had vainly implored their assistance, suddenly started up and with furious gestures and cries, made towards the porter. Guessing his intention, Blaize took to his heels, and finding himself closely pressed, broke through the hedge on the right, and speeded across the field. In spite of the alarming nature of the occurrence, the apprentice could not help laughing at the unwonted agility displayed by the fat little porter, who ran so

swiftly that it appeared probable he would distance his pursuer. To prevent mischief, however, Leonard set off after them, and was fast gaining upon the lazar, whose strength was evidently failing, when the poor wretch uttered a loud cry, and fell to the ground. On coming up, Leonard found him lying with his face in the grass, and convulsed by the agonies of death, and perceiving that all was over, hurried after the porter, whom he found seated on a gate, at the further end of the field, solacing himself with a draught of plague-water.

"Oh, Leonard!" groaned the latter, "how little do we know what is for our good! I was delighted to quit my master's house this morning, but I now wish with all my heart I was back again. I am afraid I shall die of the plague after all. Pray what are the first symptoms?"

"Poh! poh! don't think about it, and you will take no harm," rejoined Leonard. "Put by your phial, and let us make the best of our way to Farmer Wingfield's dwelling."

Being now in sight of the farm, which, from its elevated situation, could be distinguished at the distance of two miles in this direc-

tion, they easily shaped their course towards it across the fields. When about half way up the hill, Leonard paused to look behind him. The view was exquisite, and it was precisely the hour (just before sunset) at which it could be seen to the greatest advantage. On the right, his gaze wandered to the beautiful and well-wooded heights of Richmond and Wimbledon, beyond which he could trace the long line of the Surrey hills, while nearer he perceived Notting Hill, now covered with habitations, but then a verdant knoll, crowned by a few trees, but without so much as a cottage upon it. On the left stood Hampstead; at that time a collection of pretty cottages, but wanting its present chief ornament, the church. At the foot of the hill rich meadows, bordered with fine hedges, interspersed with well-grown timber, spread out as far as the eye could reach. Nothing destroyed the rural character of the prospect; nor was there any indication of the neighbourhood of a great city, except the lofty tower and massive body of Saint Paul's, which appeared above the tops of the intervening trees in the distance.

As on former occasions, when contemplating

the surrounding country from the summit of the cathedral, Leonard could not help contrasting the beauty of the scene before him with the horrible scourge by which it was ravaged. Never had the country looked so beautiful — never, therefore, was the contrast so forcible; and it appeared to him like a lovely mask hiding the hideous and ghastly features of death. Tinged by the sombre hue of his thoughts, the whole scene changed its complexion. The smiling landscape seemed to darken, and the cool air of evening to become hot and noisome, as if laden with the deadly exhalations of the pestilence. Nor did the workings of his imagination stop here. He fancied even at this distance, — nearly seven miles, — that he could discern Solomon Eagle on the summit of Saint Paul's. At first, the figure looked like a small black speck; but it gradually dilated, until it became twice the size of the cathedral, upon the central tower of which its feet rested, while its arms were spread abroad over the city. In its right hand the gigantic figure held a blazing torch, and in the left a phial, from the mouth of which a stream of dark liquid descended. So vividly did this phantasm pre-

sent itself to Leonard, that, almost convinced of its reality, he placed his hands before his eyes for a few moments, and on withdrawing them, was glad to find that the delusion was occasioned by a black cloud over the cathedral, which his distempered fancy had converted into the colossal figure of the enthusiast.

Blaize, who had taken the opportunity of his companion's abstraction to sip a little more plague-water, now approached, and told him that Wingfield was descending the hill to meet them. Rousing himself, Leonard ran towards the farmer, who appeared delighted to see them back again, and conducted them to his dwelling. Owing to the tender and truly-maternal attention of Dame Wingfield, Amabel was so much better that she was able to join the party at supper, though she took no share in the meal. Wingfield listened to the soft tones of her voice as she conversed with his wife, and at last, unable to control his emotion, laid down his knife and fork, and quitted the table.

"What is the matter with your husband?" inquired Amabel of her hostess. "I hope he is not unwell."

"Oh! no," replied the good dame; "your

voice reminds him of our daughter, whose history I have related to you,— that is all."

"Alas!" exclaimed Amabel, with a sympathizing look, "I will be silent, if it pains him to hear me speak."

"On no account," rejoined Dame Wingfield. "The tears he has shed will relieve him. He could not weep when poor Sarah died, and I feared his heart would break. Talk to him as you have talked to me, and you will do him a world of good."

Shortly afterwards, the farmer returned to the table, and the meal proceeded to its close without further interruption. As soon as the board was cleared, Wingfield took a chair by Amabel, who, in compliance with his wife's request, spoke to him about his daughter, and in terms calculated to afford him consolation. Leonard was enraptured by her discourse, and put so little constraint upon his admiration, that Nizza Macascree could not repress a pang of jealousy. As to Blaize, who had eaten as much as he could cram, and emptied a large jug of the farmer's stout ale, he took his chair to a corner, and speedily fell asleep; his hoarse but tranquil breathing proving that the alarms

he had undergone during the day did not haunt his slumbers. Before separating for the night, Amabel entreated that prayers might be said, and her request being readily granted, she was about to retire with Nizza, when Wingfield detained them.

"I have been thinking, that I might offer you a safe asylum here," he said. "If you like it, you shall remain with us till your health is fully reinstated."

"I thank you most kindly for the offer," returned Amabel gratefully; "and if I do not accept it, it is neither because I should not esteem myself safe here, nor because I am unwilling to be indebted to your hospitality, but that I have been specially advised, as my last chance of recovery, to try the air of Berkshire. I have little hope myself, but I owe it to those who love me, to make the experiment."

"If such is the case," returned the farmer, "I will not attempt to persuade you further. But if, at any future time, you should need change of air, my house shall be entirely at your service."

Dame Wingfield warmly seconded her husband's wish, and with renewed thanks, Amabel

and her companion withdrew. As there was not sufficient room for their accommodation within the house, Leonard and the porter took up their quarters in the barn, and throwing themselves upon a heap of straw, slept soundly till three o'clock, when they arose, and began to prepare for their journey. Wingfield was likewise astir, and after assisting them to feed and dress their horses, took them into the house, where a plentiful breakfast awaited them. At the close of the meal, Amabel and Nizza, who had breakfasted in their own room, made their appearance. All being in readiness for their departure, Dame Wingfield took leave of her guests with tears in her eyes, and the honest farmer was little less affected. Both gazed after them as long as they continued in sight.

Having ascertained from Wingfield the route they ought to pursue, Leonard proceeded about a quarter of a mile along the Harrow Road, and then turned off on the left into a common, which brought them to Acton, from whence they threaded a devious lane to Brentford. Here they encountered several fugitives from the great city, and as they approached Hounslow, learnt from other wayfarers that a band

of highwaymen, by whom the heath was infested, had become more than usually daring since the outbreak of the pestilence, and claimed a heavy tax from all travellers. This was bad news to Leonard, who became apprehensive for the safety of the bag of gold given to Nizza by the enthusiast, and he would have taken another road, if it had been practicable; but as there was no alternative except to proceed, he put all the money he had about him into a leathern purse, trusting that the highwaymen, if they attacked them, would be content with this booty.

When about half way across the vast heath, which spread around them, in a wild but not unpicturesque expanse, for many miles on either side, Leonard perceived a band of horsemen, amounting perhaps to a dozen, galloping towards them, and not doubting they were the robbers in question, communicated his suspicions to his companions. Neither Amabel nor Nizza Macascree appeared much alarmed, but Blaize was so terrified that he could scarcely keep his seat, and was with difficulty prevented from turning his horse's head and riding off in the opposite direction.

By this time, the highwaymen had come up. With loud oaths, two of their number held pistols to the heads of Leonard and Blaize, and demanded their money. The apprentice replied by drawing forth his purse, and besought the fellow to whom he gave it not to maltreat his companion. The man rejoined with a savage imprecation that he "would maltreat them both, if they did not instantly dismount and let him search the saddle-bags;" and he was proceeding to drag Amabel from the saddle, when Leonard struck him a violent blow with his heavy riding-whip, which brought him to the ground. He was up again, however, in an instant, and would have fired his pistol at the apprentice, if a masked individual, who was evidently, from the richness of his attire, and the deference paid him by the others, the captain of the band, had not interfered.

"You are rightly served, Dick Dosset," said this person, "for your rudeness to a lady. I will have none of my band guilty of incivility, and if this young man had not punished you, I would have done so myself. Pass free, my pretty damsel," he added, bowing gallantly to Amabel; "you shall not be further molested."

Meanwhile, Blaize exhibited the contents of his pockets to the other highwayman, who, having opened the box of rufuses and smelt at the phial of plague-water, returned them to him with a look of disgust, and bade him follow his companions. As Leonard was departing, the captain of the band rode after him, and inquired whether he had heard at what hour the King meant to leave Whitehall.

"The court is about to adjourn to Oxford," he added, "and the King and some of his courtiers will cross the heath to-day, when I propose to levy the same tax from his Majesty that I do from his subjects."

Leonard replied, that he was utterly ignorant of the King's movements; and explaining whence he came the captain left him. The intelligence he had thus accidentally obtained was far from satisfactory to the apprentice. For some distance, their road would be the same as that about to be taken by the monarch and his attendants, amongst whom it was not improbable Rochester might be numbered; and the possibility that the Earl might overtake them and discover Amabel, filled him with uneasiness. Concealing his alarm, however, he

urged his steed to a quicker pace, and proceeded briskly on his way, glad, at least, that he had not lost Solomon Eagle's gift to Nizza. Amabel's weakly condition compelled them to rest at frequent intervals, and it was not until evening was drawing in that they descended the steep hill leading to the beautiful village of Henley-upon-Thames, where they proposed to halt for the night.

Crossing the bridge, they found a considerable number of the inhabitants assembled in the main street and in the market-place, in expectation of the King's passing through the town on his way to Oxford, intimation of his approach having been conveyed by avant-couriers. Leonard proceeded to the principal inn, and was fortunate enough to procure accommodation. Having conducted Amabel and Nizza to their room, he was repairing to the stable with Blaize to see after their steeds, when a loud blowing of horns was heard on the bridge, succeeded by the tramp of horses, and the rattling of wheels, and the next moment, four valets in splendid livery rode up, followed by a magnificent coach. The shouts of the assemblage proclaimed that it was the King. The

cavalcade stopped before the inn, from the yard of which six fine horses were brought and attached to the royal carriage, in place of others, which were removed. Charles was laughing heartily, and desired his attendants, who were neither numerous nor well-armed, to take care they were not robbed again between this place and Oxford; "though," added the monarch, "it is now of little consequence, since we have nothing to lose."

"Is it possible your Majesty can have been robbed?" asked the landlord, who stood cap in hand at the door of the carriage.

"I'faith man, it *is* possible," rejoined the King. "We were stopped on Hounslow Heath by a band of highwaymen, who carried off two large coffers filled with gold, and would have eased us of our swords and snuff-boxes, but for the interposition of their captain, who, as we live, is one of the politest men breathing, — is he not, Rochester?"

Leonard Holt, who was among the crowd of spectators, started at the mention of this name, and he trembled as the Earl leaned forward, in answer to the King's question. The eyes of the rivals met at this moment, for both were within

a few yards of each other, and Rochester, whose cheek flushed with anger, solicited the King's permission to alight, but Charles, affirming it was getting late, would not permit him, and as the horses were harnessed, and the drivers mounted, he ordered them to proceed without delay.

Inexpressibly relieved by his rival's departure, Leonard returned to the house, and acquainted Amabel with what had occurred. Quitting Henley betimes on the following morning, they arrived in about three hours at Wallingford, where they halted for some time, and then pursuing their journey, reached Wantage at four o'clock, where they tarried for an hour. Up to this time, Leonard had doubted the possibility of reaching their destination that night; but Amabel assuring him she felt no fatigue, he determined to push on. Accordingly, having refreshed their steeds, they set forward, and soon began to mount the beautiful downs lying on the west of this ancient town.

Crossing these heights, whence they obtained the most magnificent and extensive views of the surrounding country, they reached in about three-quarters of an hour the pretty little hamlet

of Kingston Lisle. Here they again paused at a small inn at the foot of a lofty hill, denominated, from a curious relic kept there, the Blowing Stone. This rocky fragment, which is still in existence, is perforated by a number of holes, which emit, if blown into, a strange bellowing sound. Unaware of this circumstance, Leonard entered the house with the others, and had just seated himself, when they were astounded by a strange unearthly roar. Rushing forth, Leonard found Blaize with his cheeks puffed out and his mouth applied to the stone, into which he was blowing with all his force, and producing the above-mentioned extraordinary noise.

Shortly after this, the party quitted the Blowing Stone, and having toiled up the steep sides of the hill, they were amply repaid on reaching its summit by one of the finest views they had ever beheld. In fact, the hill on which they stood commanded the whole of the extensive and beautiful vale of the White Horse, which was spread out before them as far as the eye could reach, like a vast panorama, disclosing a thousand fields covered with abundant, though as yet immature crops. It was a goodly

prospect, and seemed to promise plenty and prosperity to the country. Almost beneath them stood the reverend church of Uffington overtopping the ancient village clustering round it. Numerous other towers and spires could be seen peeping out of groves of trees, which, together with the scattered mansions and farm-houses surrounded by granges and stacks of hay and beans, gave interest and diversity to the prospect. The two most prominent objects in the view were the wooded heights of Farringdon, on the one hand, and those of Abingdon on the other.

Proceeding along the old Roman road, still distinctly marked out, and running along the ridge of this beautiful chain of hills, they arrived at an immense Roman encampment, vulgarly called Uffington Castle, occupying the crown of a hill. A shepherd, who was tending a flock of sheep which were browsing on the delicious herbage to be found within the vast circular space enclosed by the inner vallum of the camp, explained its purpose, and they could not but regard it with interest. He informed them that they were in the neighbourhood of the famous White Horse, a figure cut out of the turf on the

hill side by the Saxons, and visible for many miles. Conducting them to a point whence they could survey this curious work, their guide next directed them to Ashdown Lodge, which lay, he told them, at about four miles distance. They had wandered a little out of their course, but he accompanied them for a mile, until they came in sight of a thick grove of trees clothing a beautiful valley, above which could be seen the lofty cupola of the mansion.

Cheered by the sight, and invigorated by the fresh breeze blowing in this healthful region, they pressed forward, and soon drew near the mansion, which they found was approached by four noble avenues. They had not advanced far, when a stalwart personage, six feet two high, and proportionately stoutly made, issued from the covert. He had a gun over his shoulder, and was attended by a couple of fine dogs. Telling them he was called John Lutcombe, and was the Earl of Craven's gamekeeper, he inquired their business; and on being informed of it, changed his surly manner to one of great cordiality, and informed them that Mrs. Buscot, — such was the name of Amabel's aunt, — was

at home, and would be heartily glad to see them.

"I have often heard her speak of her brother, Mr. Bloundel," he said; "and am well aware that he is an excellent man. Poor soul! she has been very uneasy about him and his family during this awful dispensation, though she had received a letter to say that he was about to close his house, and hoped, under the blessing of Providence, to escape the pestilence. His daughter will be welcome, and she cannot come to a healthier spot than Ashdown, nor to a better nurse than Mrs. Buscot."

With this, he led the way to the court-yard, and entering the dwelling, presently returned with a middle-aged woman, whom Amabel instantly knew, from the likeness to her father, must be her aunt. Mrs. Buscot caught her in her arms, and almost smothered her with kisses. As soon as the first transports of surprise and joy had subsided, the good housekeeper took her niece and Nizza Macascree into the house, and desired John Lutcombe to attend to the others.

CHAPTER VIII.

ASHDOWN LODGE.

Erected by Inigo Jones, and still continuing in precisely the same state as at the period of this history, Ashdown Lodge is a large square edifice, built in the formal French taste of the seventeenth century, with immense casements, giving it the appearance of being all glass, a high roof lighted by dormer windows, terminated at each angle by a tall and not very ornamental chimney, and surmounted by a lofty and lantern-like belvidere, crowned in its turn by a glass cupola. The belvidere opens upon a square gallery defended by a broad balustrade, and overlooking the umbrageous masses and lovely hills around it. The house, as has been stated, is approached by four noble avenues, the timber constituting which is of course much finer now than at the period under consideration, and possesses a delightful old-fashioned

garden, and stately terrace. The rooms are lofty but small, and there is a magnificent staircase, occupying nearly half the interior of the building. Among other portraits decorating the walls is one of Elizabeth Stuart, daughter of James the First, and Queen of Bohemia, for whom the first Earl of Craven entertained so romantic an attachment, and to whom he was supposed to be privately united. Nothing can be more secluded than the situation of the mansion, lying as it does in the midst of a gentle valley, surrounded by a thick wood, and without having a single habitation in view. Its chief interest, however, must always be derived from its connection with the memory of the chivalrous and high-souled nobleman by whom it was erected, and who made it occasionally his retreat after the death of his presumed royal consort, which occurred about four years previous to the date of this history.

Amabel was delighted with her new abode, and she experienced the kindness of a parent from her aunt, with whom, owing to circumstances, she had not hitherto been personally acquainted, having only seen her when too young to retain any recollection of the event.

The widow of a farmer, who had resided on Lord Craven's estate near Kingston Lisle, Mrs. Buscot, after her husband's death, had been engaged as housekeeper at Ashdown Lodge, and had filled the situation for many years to the entire satisfaction of her employer. She was two or three years older than her brother, Mr. Bloundel; but the perfect health she enjoyed, and which she attributed to the salubrious air of the downs, combined with her natural cheerfulness of disposition, made her look much the younger of the two. Her features, besides their kindly and benevolent expression, were extremely pleasing, and must, some years ago, have been beautiful. Even now, what with her fresh complexion, her white teeth, and plump figure, she made no slight pretensions to comeliness. She possessed the same good sense and integrity of character as her brother, together with his strong religious feeling, but entirely unaccompanied by austerity.

Having no children, she was able to bestow her entire affections upon Amabel, whose sad story, when she became acquainted with it, painfully affected her; nor was she less concerned at her precarious state of health. For

the first day or two after her arrival, Amabel suffered greatly from the effects of the journey, but after that time, she gained strength so rapidly, that Mrs. Buscot, who, at first, had well-nigh despaired of her recovery, began to indulge a hope. The gentle sufferer would sit throughout the day with her aunt and Nizza Macascree in the gallery near the belvidere, inhaling the pure breeze blowing from the surrounding hills, and stirring the tree-tops beneath her.

"I never expected so much happiness," she observed, on one occasion, to Mrs. Buscot, "and begin to experience the truth of Doctor Hodges's assertion, that with returning health, the desire of life would return. I now wish to live."

"I am heartily glad to hear you say so," replied Mrs. Buscot, "and hold it a certain sign of your speedy restoration to health. Before you have been a month with me, I expect to bring back the roses to those pale cheeks."

"You are too sanguine, I fear, dear aunt," rejoined Amabel; "but the change that has taken place in my feelings, may operate beneficially upon my constitution."

"No doubt of it, my dear," replied Mrs. Buscot; "no doubt."

The good dame felt a strong inclination at this moment to introduce a subject very near her heart, but feeling doubtful as to its reception, she checked herself. The devoted attachment of the apprentice to her niece, had entirely won her regard, and she fondly hoped she should be able to wean Amabel from all thought of the Earl of Rochester, and induce her to give her hand to her faithful lover. With this view, she often spoke to her of Leonard—of his devotion and constancy—his good looks and excellent qualities, and though Amabel assented to all she said, Mrs. Buscot was sorry to perceive that the impression she desired was not produced. It was not so with Nizza Macascree. Whenever Leonard's name was mentioned, her eye sparkled, her cheek glowed, and she responded so warmly to all that was said in his praise, that Mrs. Buscot soon found out the state of her heart. The discovery occasioned her some little disquietude, for the worthy creature could not bear the idea of making even her niece happy at the expence of another.

As to the object of all this tender interest, he felt far happier than he had done for some

time. He saw Amabel every day, and noted with unspeakable delight the gradual improvement which appeared to be taking place in her health. The greater part of his time, however, was not passed in her society, but in threading the intricacies of the wood, or in rambling over the neighbouring downs; and he not only derived pleasure from these rambles, but his health and spirits, which had been not a little shaken by the awful scenes he had recently witnessed, were materially improved. Here, at last, he seemed to have got rid of the grim spectre which, for two months, had constantly haunted him. No greater contrast can be conceived than his present quiet life offered to the fearful excitement he had recently undergone. For hot and narrow thoroughfares reeking with pestilential effluvia, resounding with frightful shrieks, or piteous cries, and bearing on every side marks of the destructive progress of the scourge — for these terrible sights and sounds — for the charnel horrors of the plague-pit, — the scarcely-less revolting scenes at the pest-house — the dismal bell announcing the dead-cart — the doleful cries of the buriers — for graves surfeited with corruption, and streets

filled with the dying and the dead—and, above all, for the ever-haunting expectation that a like fate might be his own,—he had exchanged green hills, fresh breezes, spreading views, the song of the lark, and a thousand other delights, and assurances of health and contentment. Often, as he gazed from the ridge of the downs into the wide-spread vale beneath, he wondered whether the destroying angel had smitten any of its peaceful habitations, and breathed a prayer for their preservation.

But the satisfaction he derived from having quitted the infected city, was trifling compared with that of Blaize, whose sole anxiety was lest he should be sent back to London. Seldom straying farther than the gates of the mansion, though often invited by John Lutcombe to accompany him to some of the neighbouring villages; having little to do, and less to think of, unless to calculate how much he could consume at the next meal,—for he had banished all idea of the plague,—he conceived himself at the summit of happiness, and waxed so sleek and round that his face shone like a full moon, while his doublet would scarcely meet around his waist.

One day, about a fortnight after their arrival, and when things were in this happy state, Amabel, who was seated as usual in the gallery at the summit of the house, observed a troop of horsemen, very gallantly equipped, appear at the further end of the northern avenue. An inexpressible terror seized her, and she would have fled into the house, but her limbs refused their office.

"Look there!" she cried to Nizza, who, at that moment, presented herself at the glass-door. "Look there!" she said, pointing to the cavalcade; "what I dreaded has come to pass. The Earl of Rochester has found me out, and is coming hither to carry me off. But I will die rather than accompany him."

"You may be mistaken," replied Nizza, expressing a hopefulness, which her looks belied; "it may be the Earl of Craven."

"You give me new life," rejoined Amabel; "but no — no — my aunt has told me that the good Earl will not quit the city during the continuance of the plague. And see! some of the horsemen have distinguished us, and are waving their hats. My heart tells me the Earl of Rochester is amongst them. Give me your arm,

Nizza, and I will try to gain some place of concealment."

"Ay, let us fly," replied the other, assisting her towards the door; "I am in equal danger with yourself, for Sir Paul Parravicin is doubtless with them. Oh! where — where is Leonard?"

"He must be below," cried Amabel. "But he could not aid us at this juncture. We must depend upon ourselves."

Descending a short staircase, they entered Amabel's chamber, and fastening the door, awaited with breathless anxiety the arrival of the horsemen. Though the room whither they had retreated was in the upper part of the house, they could distinctly hear what was going on below, and shortly afterwards the sound of footsteps on the stairs, blended with merry voices and loud laughter — amid which Amabel could distinguish the tones of the Earl of Rochester — reached them.

While both were palpitating with fright, the handle of the door was tried, and a voice announced that the apprentice was without.

"All is lost!" he cried, speaking through the keyhole; "the King is here, and is accom-

panied by the Earl of Rochester and other profligates."

"The King!" exclaimed Amabel joyfully; "then I am no longer apprehensive."

"As yet, no inquiries have been made after you," continued Leonard, unconscious of the effect produced by his intelligence, "but it is evident they know you are here. Be prepared, therefore."

"I *am* prepared," rejoined Amabel. And as she spoke, she threw open the door and admitted Leonard. "Do not stay with us," she added to him. "In case of need, I will throw myself on his Majesty's protection."

"It will avail you little," rejoined Leonard, distrustfully.

"I do not think so," said Amabel, confidently. "I have faith in his acknowledged kindness of heart."

"Perhaps, you are right," returned Leonard. "Mrs. Buscot is at present with his Majesty in the receiving-room. Will you not make fast your door?"

"No," replied Amabel, firmly; "if the King will not defend me, I will defend myself."

Leonard glanced at her with admiration, but he said nothing.

"Is Sir Paul Parravicin here?" asked Nizza Macascree, with great anxiety.

"I have not seen him," replied Leonard; "and I have carefully examined the countenances of all the King's attendants."

"Heaven be praised!" exclaimed Nizza.

At this juncture, Mrs. Buscot entered the room. Her looks bespoke great agitation, and she trembled violently.

"You have no doubt heard from Leonard that the King and his courtiers are below," she said. "His Majesty inquired whether you were here, and I did not dare to deceive him. He desires to see you, and has sent me for you. What is to be done?" she added, with a look of distraction. "I suppose you must obey."

"There is no alternative," replied Amabel, "I will obey his Majesty's commands as soon as I can collect myself. Take back that answer, dear aunt."

"Has Leonard told you that the Earl of Rochester is here?" pursued Mrs. Buscot.

Amabel replied in the affirmative.

"God grant that good may come of it!" cried Mrs. Buscot, clasping her hands together, as she quitted the room; "but I am sorely afraid."

A half-suppressed groan from the apprentice told that he shared in her apprehensions.

"Leave us, Leonard," said Amabel; "I would prepare myself for the interview."

The apprentice obeyed, and closing the door after him, stationed himself at the foot of the staircase. Left alone with Nizza, Amabel threw herself on her knees and besought the support of heaven on this trying occasion. She then arose, and giving her hand to Nizza, they went down stairs together. Leonard followed them at a little distance, and with a beating heart. Two gentlemen-ushers were posted at the door of the chamber occupied by the King. Not far from them stood Mrs. Buscot, who having made known her niece to the officials, they instantly admitted her, but ordered Nizza to remain outside.

On entering the room, Amabel at once discovered the King. He was habited in a magnificent riding-dress and was seated on a rich fautueil, around which were grouped a dozen gaily-attired courtiers. Amongst these were the Earl of Rochester and Sir George Etherege. As Amabel advanced, glances of insolent curiosity were directed towards her, and Rochester step-

ping forward, offered to lead her to the King. She, however, declined the attention. Greatly mortified, the Earl would have seized her hand; but there was so much dignity in her deportment, so much coldness in her looks, that in spite of his effrontery, he felt abashed. Charles smiled at his favourite's rebuff, but, in common with the others, he could not help being struck by Amabel's extraordinary beauty and natural dignity, and he observed in an undertone to Etherege, "Is it possible this can be a grocer's daughter?"

"She passes for such, my liege," replied Etherege, with a smile. "But I cannot swear to her parentage."

"Since I have seen her, I do not wonder at Rochester's extravagant passion," rejoined the Monarch. "But, oddsfish! she seems to care little for him."

Having approached within a short distance of the King, Amabel would have prostrated herself before him, but he prevented her.

"Nay, do not kneel, sweetheart," he said; "I am fully satisfied of your loyalty, and never exact homage from one of your sex, but, on the contrary, am ever ready to pay it. I have heard much of your attractions, and, what is

seldom the case in such matters, find they have not been overrated. The brightest of our court beauties cannot compare with you."

"A moment ago, the fair Amabel might be said to lack bloom," observed Etherege; "but your Majesty's praises have called a glowing colour to her cheek."

"Will you deign to grant me a moment's hearing, my liege?" said Amabel, looking steadfastly at the King.

"Not a moment's hearing merely, sweetheart," returned Charles; "but an hour's, if you list. I could dwell on the music of your tones for ever."

"I thank your Majesty for your condescension," she replied; "but I will not long trespass on your patience. What I have to say concerns the Earl of Rochester."

"Stand forward, my lord," said Charles to the Earl, "and let us hear what complaint is to be made against you."

Rochester advanced, and threw a passionate and half-reproachful glance at Amabel.

"It may be improper for me to trouble your Majesty on so light a matter," said Amabel;

"but your kindness emboldens me to speak unreservedly. You may be aware that this nobleman once entertained, or feigned to entertain, an ardent attachment for me."

"I need scarcely assure you, my liege," interposed Rochester; "that it was no feigned passion. And it is needless to add, that however ardently I felt towards my fair accuser then, my passion has in nowise abated."

"I should wonder if it had," rejoined Charles, gallantly.

"I will not contradict you, my lord," said Amabel; "it *is* possible you may have loved me, though I find it difficult to reconcile your professions of regard with your conduct — but this is not to the purpose. Whether you loved me or not, I loved *you*—deeply and devotedly. There is no sacrifice I would not have made for him," she continued, turning to the King, "and influenced by these feelings, and deluded by false promises, I forgot my duty, and was rash to quit my home with him."

"All this I have heard, sweetheart" replied Charles. "There is nothing very remarkable in it. It is the ordinary course of such affairs. I am happy to be the means of restoring your

lover to you, and, in fact, came hither for that very purpose."

"You mistake me, my liege," replied Amabel. "I do not desire to have him restored to me. Fortunately for myself, I have succeeded in mastering my love for him. The struggle has well-nigh cost me my life — but I *have* conquered."

"I have yet to learn, sweetheart," observed Charles, with an incredulous look, "that woman's love, if deeply fixed, *can* be subdued."

"If I had not been supported by religion, my liege, I could *not* have subdued it," rejoined Amabel. "Night and day, I have passed in supplicating the Great Power that implanted this fatal passion in my breast, and, at length, my prayers have prevailed."

"Aha! we have a devotee here!" thought Charles. "Am I to understand, fair saint, that you would reject the Earl, if he were to offer you his hand?" he asked.

"Unquestionably," replied Amabel, firmly.

"This is strange," muttered Charles. "The girl is evidently in earnest. What says your lordship?" he added to Rochester.

"That she shall be mine, whether she loves

me or not," replied the Earl. "My pride is piqued to the conquest."

"No wonder!—the resistless Rochester flouted by a grocer's daughter. Ha! ha!" observed Charles, laughing, while the rest of the courtiers joined in his merriment.

"Oh! sire," exclaimed Amabel, throwing herself at the King's feet, and bursting into tears, "do not abandon me, I beseech you. I cannot requite the Earl's attachment—and shall die if he continues his pursuit. Command him—oh! command him to desist."

"I fear you have not dealt fairly with me, sweetheart," said the King. "There is a well-favoured youth without, whom the Earl pointed out as your father's apprentice. Have you transferred your affections to him?"

"Your Majesty has solved the enigma," observed Rochester, bitterly.

"You wrong me, my lord," replied Amabel. "Leonard Holt is without. Let him be brought into the royal presence and interrogated; and if he will affirm that I have given him the slightest encouragement by look or word, or even state that he himself indulges a hope of holding a place in my regards, I will admit

there is some foundation for the charge. I pray your Majesty to send for him."

"It is needless," replied Charles, coldly. "I do not doubt your assertion. But you will do the Earl an injustice as well as yourself, if you do not allow him a fair hearing."

"If you will allow me five minutes alone with you, Amabel, or will take a single turn with me on the terrace, I will engage to remove every doubt," insinuated Rochester.

"You would fail to do so, my lord," replied Amabel. "The time is gone by when those accents, once so winning in my ear, can move me."

"At least give me the opportunity," implored the Earl.

"No," replied Amabel, decidedly, "I will never willingly meet you more; for though I am firm in my purpose, I do not think it right to expose myself to temptation. And now that I have put your Majesty in full possession of my sentiments," she added to the King, "now that I have told you with what bitter tears I have striven to wash out my error,—I implore you to extend your protecting hand towards me, and to save me from further persecution on the part of the Earl."

"I shall remain at this place to-night," returned Charles. "Take till to-morrow to consider of it, and if you continue in the same mind, your request shall be granted."

"At least, enjoin the Earl to leave me unmolested till then," cried Amabel.

"Hum!" exclaimed the King, exchanging a look with Rochester.

"For pity, sire, do not hesitate," cried Amabel, in a tone of such agony that the good-natured monarch could not resist it.

"Well, well," he rejoined; "it shall be as you desire. Rochester, you have heard our promise, and will act in conformity with it."

The Earl bowed carelessly.

"Nay, nay, my lord," pursued Charles, authoritatively, "my commands *shall* be obeyed, and if you purpose otherwise, I will place you under restraint."

"Your Majesty's wishes are sufficient restraint," rejoined Rochester; "I am all obedience."

"It is well," replied Charles. "Are you satisfied, fair damsel?"

"Perfectly," replied Amabel. And making a profound and grateful reverence to the King, she retired.

Nizza Macascree met her at the door, and it was fortunate she did so, or Amabel, whose strength began to fail her, would otherwise have fallen. While she was thus engaged, Charles caught sight of the piper's daughter, and being greatly struck by her beauty, inquired her name.

"Odds fish!" he exclaimed, when informed of it by Rochester, "a piper's daughter! She is far more beautiful than your mistress."

"If I procure her for your Majesty, will you withdraw your interdiction from me?" rejoined the Earl.

"No — no — that is impossible, after the pledge I have given," replied Charles. "But you must bring this lovely creature to me anon. I am enchanted with her, and do not regret this long ride, since it has brought her under my notice."

"Your Majesty's wishes shall be obeyed," said Rochester. "I will not wait till to-morrow for an interview with Amabel," he added to himself.

Supported by Nizza Macascree and her aunt, and followed by Leonard, Amabel contrived to reach her own chamber, and as soon as she was

sufficiently recovered from the agitation she had experienced, detailed to them all that had passed in her interview with the King. While the party were consulting together as to the course to be pursued in this emergency, the tap of a wand was heard at the door, and the summons being answered by Mrs. Buscot, she found one of the ushers without, who informed her it was the King's pleasure that no one should leave the house till the following day, without his permission.

"To ensure obedience to his orders," continued the usher, "his Majesty requires that the keys of the stables be delivered to the keeping of his chief page, Mr. Chiffinch, who has orders, together with myself, to keep watch during the night."

So saying, he bowed and retired, while Mrs. Buscot returned with this new, and alarming piece of intelligence to the others.

"Why should the mandate be respected?" cried Leonard, indignantly. "We have committed no crime, and ought not to be detained prisoners. Trust to me, and I will find some means of eluding their vigilance. If you remain here till to-morrow," he added to Amabel, "you are lost."

"Do not expect any rational advice from me, my dear niece," observed Mrs. Buscot, "for I am fairly bewildered."

"Shall I not forfeit the King's protection by disobeying his injunctions?" replied Amabel. "I am safer here than if I were to seek a new asylum, which would be speedily discovered."

"Heaven grant you may not have cause to repent your decision!" cried Leonard, despondingly.

"I must now, perforce, quit you, my dear niece," said Mrs. Buscot, "though it breaks my heart to do so. His Majesty's arrival has thrown everything into confusion, and if I do not look after the supper, which is commanded at an early hour, it will never be ready. As it is, there will be nothing fit to set before him. What with my distress about you, and my anxiety about the royal repast, I am well-nigh beside myself."

With this, she quitted the room, and Amabel signifying to Leonard that she desired to be left alone with Nizza Macascree, he departed at the same time.

As Mrs. Buscot had stated, the utmost confusion prevailed below. The royal purveyor, and cook, who formed part of the King's suite

were busily employed in the kitchen, and though they had the whole household at their command, they made rather slow progress at first, owing to the want of materials. In a short time, however, this difficulty was remedied. Ducks were slaughtered by the dozen; fowls by the score; and a couple of fat geese shared the same fate. The store-ponds were visited for fish by John Lutcombe; and as the country abounded with game, a large supply of pheasants, partridges, and rabbits was speedily procured by the keeper and his assistants. Amongst others, Blaize lent a helping hand in this devastation of the poultry yard, and he had just returned to the kitchen, and commenced plucking one of the geese, when he was aroused by a slap on the shoulder, and looking up beheld Pillichody.

"What ho! my little Blaize, my physic-taking porter," cried the bully; "how wags the world with you? And how is my pretty Patience? How is that peerless kitchen-maiden? By the god of love! I am dying to behold her again."

"Patience is well enough for aught I know," replied Blaize, in a surly tone. "But it is use-

less for you to think of her. She is betrothed to me."

"I know it," replied Pillichody; "but do not suppose you are the sole master of her affections. The little charmer has too good taste for that. 'Blaize,' said she to me, 'will do very well for a husband, but he cannot expect me to continue faithful to him.'"

"Cannot I!" exclaimed the porter, reddening. "Fiends take her! but I do! When did she say this?"

"When I last visited your master's house," replied Pillichody. "Sweet soul! I shall never forget her tender looks, nor the kisses she allowed me to snatch from her honeyed lips when your back was turned. The very recollection of them is enchanting."

"Zounds and fury!" cried Blaize, transported with rage. "If I am only a porter, while you pretend to be a major, I will let you see I am the better man of the two." And taking the goose by the neck, he swung it round his head like a flail, and began to batter Pillichody about the face with it.

"'Sdeath!" cried the bully, endeavouring to draw his sword, "if you do not instantly desist,

I will treat you like that accursed bird — cut your throat, pluck, stuff, roast, and eat you afterwards." He was, however, so confounded by the attack that he could offer no resistance, and in retreating, caught his foot against the leg of a table, and fell backwards on the floor. Being now completely at the porter's mercy, and seeing that the latter was preparing to pursue his advantage, with a rolling-pin which he had snatched from the dresser, he besought him piteously to spare him.

"Recant all you have said," cried Blaize, brandishing the rolling-pin over him. "Confess that you have calumniated Patience. Confess that she rejected your advances, if you ever dared to make any to her. Confess that she is a model of purity and constancy. Confess all this, villain, or I will break every bone in your body."

"I do confess it," replied Pillichody, abjectly. "She is all you describe. She never allowed me greater freedom than a squeeze of the hand."

"That was too much," replied the porter, belabouring him with the rolling-pin. "Swear that you will never attempt such a liberty again, or I will pummel you to death. Swear it."

"I swear," replied Pillichody.

"Before I allow you to rise, I must disarm you to prevent mischief," cried Blaize. And kneeling upon the prostrate bully, who groaned aloud, he drew his long blade from his side. "There, now you may get up," he added.

So elated was Blaize with his conquest, that he could do nothing for some time but strut up and down the kitchen with the sword over his shoulder, to the infinite diversion of the other domestics, and especially of John Lutcombe, who chanced to make his appearance at the time, laden with a fresh supply of game.

"Why, Blaize, man," cried the keeper, approvingly. "I did not give you credit for half so much spirit."

"No man's courage is duly appreciated until it has been tried," rejoined Blaize. "I would combat with you, gigantic John, if Patience's fidelity were called in question."

Pillichody, meanwhile, had retired with a discomfited air into a corner, where he seated himself on a stool, and eyed the porter askance, as if meditating some terrible retaliation. Secretly apprehensive of this, and thinking it becoming to act with generosity towards his foe,

Blaize marched up to him, and extended his hand in token of reconciliation. To the surprise of all, Pillichody did not reject his overtures.

"I have a great regard for you, friend Blaize," he said, "otherwise I should never rest till I had been repaid, with terrible interest, for the indignities I have endured."

"Nay, heed them not," replied Blaize. "You must make allowances for the jealous feelings you excited. I love Patience better than my life."

"Since you put it in that light," rejoined Pillichody," I am willing to overlook the offence. Snakes and scorpions! no man can be a greater martyr to jealousy than myself. I killed three of my most intimate friends for merely presuming to ogle the widow of Watling Street, who would have been mine, if she had not died of the plague."

"Don't talk of the plague, I beseech you," replied Blaize, with a shudder. "It is a subject never mentioned here."

"I am sorry I alluded to it then," rejoined Pillichody. "Give me back my sword. Nay, fear nothing. I entirely forgive you, and am

willing to drown the remembrance of our quarrel in a bottle of sack."

Readily assenting to the proposition, Blaize obtained the key of the cellar from the butler, and adjourning thither with Pillichody, they seated themselves on a cask with a bottle of sack and a couple of large glasses on a stool between them.

"I suppose you know why I am come hither?" observed the Major, smacking his lips after his second bumper.

"Not precisely," replied Blaize. "But I presume your visit has some reference to Mistress Amabel."

"A shrewd guess," rejoined Pillichody. "And this reminds me that we have omitted to drink her health."

"Her better health," returned Blaize, emptying his glass. "Heaven be praised! she has plucked up a little since we came here."

"She would soon be herself again if she were united to the Earl of Rochester," said Pillichody.

"There you are wrong," replied Blaize. "She declares she has no longer any regard for him."

"Mere caprice, believe me," rejoined Pillichody. "She loves him better than ever."

"It may be so," returned Blaize, "for Patience, who ought to know something of the matter, assured me she was dying for the Earl. And if she had not told me the contrary herself, I should not have believed it."

"Did she tell you so in the presence of Leonard?" asked Pillichody.

"Why, now I bethink me, he *was* present," replied Blaize, involuntarily putting his hand to his shoulder, as he recalled the horsewhipping he had received on that occasion.

"I knew it!" cried Pillichody. "She is afraid to confess her attachment to the Earl. Is Leonard as much devoted to her as ever?"

"I fancy so," replied Blaize; "but she certainly gives *him* no encouragement."

"Confirmation!" exclaimed Pillichody. "But fill your glass. We will drink to the Earl's speedy union with Amabel."

"Not so loud," cried Blaize, looking uneasily round the cellar. "I should not like Leonard to overhear us."

"Neither should I," returned Pillichody, "for I have something to say to you respecting him."

"You need not propose any more plans for

carrying off Amabel," cried Blaize, "for I won't take any part in them."

"I have no such intention," rejoined Pillichody. "The truth is," he added mysteriously, "I am inclined to side with you and Leonard. But as we have finished our bottle, suppose we take a turn in the court yard."

"With all my heart," replied Blaize.

Immediately after Amabel's departure, Charles proceeded with his courtiers to the garden, and continued to saunter up and down the terrace for some time, during which, he engaged Rochester in conversation, so as to give him no pretext for absenting himself. The King next ascended to the belvidere, and having surveyed the prospect from it, was about to descend, when he caught a glimpse of Nizza Macascree on the great staircase, and instantly flew towards her.

"I must have a word with you, sweetheart," he cried, taking her hand, which she did not dare to withdraw.

Ready to sink with confusion, Nizza suffered herself to be led towards the receiving-room. Motioning to the courtiers to remain without, Charles entered it with his blushing com-

panion, and after putting several questions to her, which she answered with great timidity and modesty, inquired into the state of her heart.

"Answer me frankly," he said. "Are your affections engaged?"

"Since your Majesty deigns to interest yourself so much about me," replied Nizza, "I will use no disguise. They are."

"To whom?" demanded the King.

"To Leonard Holt," was the answer.

"What! the apprentice who brought Amabel hither?" cried the King. "Why, the Earl of Rochester seemed to intimate that he was in love with Amabel. Is it so?"

"I cannot deny it," replied Nizza, hanging down her head.

"If this is the case, it is incumbent on me to provide you with a new lover," replied Charles. "What will you say, sweetheart, if I tell you you have made a royal conquest?"

"I should tremble to hear it," replied Nizza. "But your Majesty is jesting with me."

"On my soul, no!" rejoined the King, passionately. "I have never seen beauty equal to yours, sweetheart,—never have been so suddenly — so completely captivated before."

"Oh! do not use this language towards me, my liege," replied Nizza, dropping on her knee before him. "I am unworthy your notice. My heart is entirely given to Leonard Holt."

"You will speedily forget him in the brilliant destiny which awaits you, child," returned Charles, raising her. "Do not bestow another thought on the senseless dolt, who can prefer Amabel's sickly charms to your piquant attractions. By heaven! you shall be mine."

"Never!" exclaimed Nizza, extricating herself from his grasp, and rushing towards the door.

"You fly in vain," cried the King, laughingly pursuing her.

As he spoke, the door opened, and Sir Paul Parravicin entered the room. The knight started on seeing how matters stood, and the King looked surprised and angry. Taking advantage of their embarrassment, Nizza made good her retreat, and hurrying to Amabel's chamber, closed and bolted the door.

"What is the matter?" cried Amabel, startled by her agitated appearance.

"Sir Paul Parravicin is here," replied Nizza. "I have seen him. But that is not all. I am unlucky enough to have attracted the King's

fancy. He has terrified me with his proposals."

"Our persecution is never to end," rejoined Amabel; "you are as unfortunate as myself."

"And there is no possibility of escape," returned Nizza, bursting into tears; "we are snared like birds in the nets of the fowler."

"You can fly with Leonard, if you choose," replied Amabel.

"And leave you — impossible!" rejoined Nizza.

"There is nothing for it, then, but resignation," returned Amabel. "Let us put a firm trust in heaven, and no ill can befal us."

After passing several hours of the greatest disquietude, they were about to retire to rest, when Mrs. Buscot tapped at the door, and making herself known, was instantly admitted.

"Alas!" she cried, clasping her niece round the neck. "I tremble to tell you what I have heard. Despite the King's injunctions, the wicked Earl of Rochester is determined to see you before morning, and to force you to compliance with his wishes. You must fly, as soon as it is dark."

"But how am I to fly, dear aunt?" rejoined

Amabel. "You yourself know that the keys of the stable are taken away, and that two of the King's attendants will remain on the watch all night. How will it be possible to elude their vigilance?"

"Leave Leonard to manage it," replied Mrs. Buscot. "Only prepare to set out. John Lutcombe will guide you across the downs to Kingston Lisle, where good Mrs. Compton will take care of you, and when the danger is over, you can return to me."

"It is a hazardous expedient," rejoined Amabel, "and I would rather run all risks, and remain here. If the Earl should resort to violence, I can appeal to the King for protection."

"If you have any regard for me, fly," cried Nizza Macascree. "I am lost if I remain here till to-morrow."

"For *your* sake I will go, then," returned Amabel. "But I have a foreboding that I am running into the teeth of danger."

"Oh! say not so," rejoined Mrs. Buscot. "I am persuaded it is for the best. I must leave you now, but I will send Leonard to you."

"It is needless," replied Amabel. "Let

him come to us at the proper time. We will be ready."

To explain the cause of Mrs. Buscot's alarm, it will be necessary to return to the receiving-room, and ascertain what occurred after Amabel's flight. Charles, who at first had been greatly annoyed by Parravicin's abrupt entrance, speedily recovered his temper, and laughed at the other's forced apologies.

"I find I have a rival in your Majesty," observed the knight "It is unlucky for me that you have encountered Nizza. Her charms were certain to inflame you. But when I tell you I am desperately enamoured of her, I am persuaded you will not interfere with me."

"I will tell you what I will do," replied the good-humoured monarch, after a moment's reflection. "I remember your mentioning that you once played with a Captain Disbrowe for his wife, and won her from him. We will play for this girl in the same manner."

"But your Majesty is a more skilful player than Disbrowe," replied Parravicin, reluctantly.

"It matters not," rejoined the monarch; "the chances will be more equal — or rather the advantage will be greatly on your side, for

you are allowed to be the luckiest and best player at my court. If I win, she is mine. If, on the contrary, fortune favours you, I resign her."

"Since there is no avoiding it, I accept the challenge," replied Parravicin.

"The decision shall not be delayed an instant," cried Charles. "What, ho!—dice!—dice!"

An attendant answering the summons, he desired that the other courtiers should be admitted, and dice brought. The latter order could not be so easily obeyed, there being no such articles at Ashdown; and the attendants were driven to their wit's ends, when Pillichody chancing to overhear what was going forward, produced a box and dice, which were instantly conveyed to the King, and the play commenced. Charles, to his inexpressible delight, and Parravicin's chagrin, came off the winner, and the mortification of the latter was increased by the laughter and taunts of the spectators.

"You are not in your usual luck to-day," observed Rochester to him, as they walked aside.

"For all this, do not think I will surrender

Nizza," replied Parravicin, in a low tone, "I love her too well for that."

"I cannot blame you," replied Rochester. "Step this way," he added, drawing him to the further end of the room. "It is my intention to carry off Amabel to-night notwithstanding old Rowley's injunctions to the contrary, and I propose to accomplish my purpose in the following manner. I will frighten her into flying with Leonard Holt, and will then secretly follow her. Nizza Macascree is sure to accompany her, and will, therefore, be in your power."

"I see!" cried Parravicin. "A capital project!"

"Pillichody has contrived to ingratiate himself with Blaize," pursued the Earl, "and through him the matter can be easily managed. The keys of the stable, which are now entrusted to Chiffinch, shall be stolen — the horses set free — and the two damsels caught in the trap prepared for them, while the only person blamed in the matter will be Leonard."

"Bravo!" exclaimed Parravicin. "I am impatient for the scheme to be put into execution."

"I will set about it at once," returned Rochester.

And separating from Parravicin, he formed some excuse for quitting the royal presence.

About an hour afterwards, Pillichody sought out Blaize, and told him, with a very mysterious air, that he had something to confide to him.

"You know my regard for the Earl of Rochester and Sir Paul Parravicin," he said, "and that I would do anything an honourable man ought to do to assist them. But there are certain bounds which even friendship cannot induce me to pass. They meditate the worst designs against Amabel and Nizza Macascree, and intend to accomplish their base purpose before daybreak. I therefore give you notice, that you may acquaint Leonard Holt with the dangerous situation of the poor girls, and contrive their escape in the early part of the night. I will steal the keys of the stable for you from Chiffinch, and will render you every assistance in my power. But if you are discovered, you must not betray me."

"Not for the world!" replied Blaize. "I am sure we are infinitely obliged to you. It

is a horrible design, and must be prevented. I wish all this flying and escaping was over. I desire to be quiet, and am quite sorry to leave this charming place."

"There is no alternative now," rejoined Pillichody.

"So it appears," groaned Blaize.

The substance of Pillichody's communication was immediately conveyed to Leonard, who told Blaize to acquaint his informer that he should have two pieces of gold, if he brought them the keys. To obtain them was not very difficult, and the bully was aided in accomplishing the task by the Earl of Rochester in the following manner. Chiffinch was an inordinate drinker, and satisfied he could turn this failing to account, the Earl went into the hall where he was stationed, and after a little conversation, called for a flask of wine. It was brought, and while they were quaffing bumpers, Pillichody, who had entered unperceived, contrived to open a table-drawer in which the keys were placed, and slip them noiselessly into his doublet. He then stole away, and delivered his prize to Blaize, receiving in return the promised reward, and chuckling to himself at the

success of his roguery. The keys were conveyed by the porter to Leonard, and the latter handed them in his turn to John Lutcombe, who engaged to have the horses at the lower end of the south avenue an hour before midnight.

CHAPTER IX.

KINGSTON LISLE.

About half-past ten, and when it was supposed that the King and his courtiers had retired to rest, (for early hours were kept in those days,) Mrs. Buscot and Leonard repaired to Amabel's chamber. The good housekeeper noticed with great uneasiness that her niece looked excessively pale and agitated, and she would have persuaded her to abandon all idea of flight, if she had not feared that her stay might be attended with still worse consequences.

Before the party set out, Mrs. Buscot crept down stairs to see that all was safe, and returned almost instantly, with the very satisfactory intelligence that Chiffinch was snoring in a chair in the hall, and that the usher had probably retired to rest, as he was nowhere to

be seen. Not a moment, therefore, was to be lost, and they descended the great staircase as noiselessly as possible. So far all had gone well; but on gaining the hall, Amabel's strength completely deserted her, and if Leonard had not caught her in his arms, she must have fallen. He was hurrying forward with his burthen towards a passage on the right, when Chiffinch, who had been disturbed by the noise, suddenly started to his feet, and commanded him to stop. At this moment, a figure enveloped in a cloak darted from behind a door, and extinguishing the lamp which Chiffinch had taken from the table, seized him with a powerful grasp. All was now buried in darkness, and while Leonard Holt was hesitating what to do, he heard a voice, which he knew to be that of Pillichody, whisper in his ear, "Come with me — I will secure your retreat. Quick! quick!"

Suffering himself to be drawn along, and closely followed by Nizza Macascree and Mrs. Buscot, Leonard crossed the dining-chamber, not without stumbling against some of the furniture by the way, and through an open window into the court, where he found Blaize awaiting

him. Without waiting for thanks, Pillichody then disappeared, and Mrs. Buscot, having pointed out the course he ought to pursue, bade him farewell.

Hurrying across the court, he reached the south avenue, but had not proceeded far when it became evident, from the lights at the windows, as well as from the shouts and other noises proceeding from the court, that their flight was discovered. Encumbered as he was by his lovely burthen, Leonard ran on so swiftly that Nizza Macascree and Blaize could scarcely keep up with him. They found John Lutcombe at the end of the avenue with the horses, and mounting them, set off along the downs, accompanied by the keeper, who acted as their guide. Striking off on the right, they came to a spot covered over with immense grey stones, resembling those rocky fragments used by the Druids in the construction of a cromlech, and, as it was quite dark, it required some caution in passing through them. Guided by the keeper, who here took hold of the bridle of his horse, Leonard threaded the pass with safety; but Blaize was not equally fortunate Alarmed by the sounds in the rear, and not attending to

the keeper's caution, he urged his horse on, and the animal coming in contact with a stone, stumbled, and precipitated him and Nizza Macascree to the ground. Luckily, neither of them fell against the stone, or the consequences might have been fatal. John Lutcombe instantly flew to their aid, but before he reached them, Nizza Macascree had regained her feet. Blaize, however, who was considerably shaken and bruised by the fall, was not quite so expeditious, and his dilatoriness so provoked the keeper, that, seizing him in his arms, he lifted him into the saddle. Just as Nizza Macascree was placed on the pillion behind him, the tramp of horses was heard rapidly approaching. In another moment their pursuers came up, and the foremost, whose tones proclaimed him the Earl of Rochester, commanded them to stop. Inexpressibly alarmed, Amabel could not suppress a scream, and guided by the sound, the Earl dashed to her side and seized the bridle of her steed.

A short struggle took place between him and Leonard, in which the latter strove to break away; but the Earl drawing his sword, held it to his throat.

"Deliver up your mistress instantly," he cried, in a menacing tone, "or you are a dead man."

Leonard returned a peremptory refusal.

"Hold!" exclaimed Amabel, springing from the horse. "I will not be the cause of bloodshed. I implore you, my lord, to desist from this outrage. You will gain by it nothing but my death."

"Let him touch you at his peril," cried John Lutcombe, rushing towards them, and interposing his stalwart person between her and the Earl.

"Stand aside, dog!" cried Rochester, furiously, "or I will trample you beneath my horse's hoofs."

"You must first get near me to do it," rejoined the keeper. And as he spoke, he struck the horse so violent a blow with a stout oaken cudgel with which he was provided, that the animal became unmanageable, and dashed across the downs to some distance with his rider.

Meanwhile, Parravicin having ridden up with Pillichody, (for they proved to be the Earl's companions,) assailed Blaize, and commanded him to deliver up Nizza Macascree. Scared almost out of his senses, the porter would have

instantly complied, if the piper's daughter had not kept fast hold of him, and reproaching him with his cowardice, screamed loudly for help. Heedless of her cries, Parravicin seized her, and strove to drag her from the horse; but she only clung the closer to Blaize, and the other, expecting every moment to pay another visit to the ground, added his vociferations for assistance to hers.

"Leave go your hold," he cried to Pillichody, who had seized him on the other side by the collar. "Leave go, I say, or you will rend my jerkin asunder. What are you doing here? I thought you were to help us to escape."

"So I have done," rejoined Pillichody, bursting into a loud laugh; "and I am now helping to catch you again. What a blind buzzard you must be not to perceive the net spread for you! Deliver up Nizza Macascree without more ado, or, by all the fiends! I will pay you off for your dastardly assault upon me this morning."

"I cannot deliver her up," cried Blaize, "she sticks to me as fast as a burr. I shall be torn asunder between you. Help! help!"

Parravicin, having dismounted, now tore away Nizza Macascree, and was just about to transfer her to his own steed, when John Lutcombe, having driven away the Earl in the manner before described, came to the rescue. One blow from his cudgel stretched the knight on the sod, and liberated Nizza Macascree, who instantly flew to her preserver. Finding how matters stood, and that he was likely to be well backed, Blaize plucked up his courage, and grappled with Pillichody. In the struggle, they both tumbled to the ground. The keeper rushed towards them, and seizing Pillichody, began to belabour him soundly. In vain the bully implored mercy. He underwent a severe chastisement, and Blaize added a few kicks to the shower of blows proceeding from the keeper, crying, as he dealt them, "Who is the buzzard now, I should like to know?"

By this time, Parravicin had regained his legs, and the Earl of Rochester having forced back his steed, both drew their swords, and burning for vengeance, prepared to renew the charge. The affair might have assumed a serious aspect, if it had not chanced that at this juncture lights were seen hurrying along the

avenue, and the next moment, a large party issued from it.

"It is the King!" cried Rochester. "What is to be done?"

"Our prey must be abandoned," rejoined Parravicin. "It will never do to be caught here."

With this, he sprang upon his steed and disappeared across the downs with the Earl.

John Lutcombe, on perceiving the approach of the torch-bearers, instantly abandoned Pillichody, and assisting Blaize to the saddle, placed Nizza behind him. Leonard likewise, who had dismounted to support Amabel, replaced her in the pillion, and in a few seconds, the party were in motion. Pillichody, who was the only person now left, did not care to wait for the King's arrival, but snatching the bridle of his steed, which was quietly grazing at a little distance, mounted him, and galloped off in the direction which he fancied had been taken by the Earl and his companion.

Guided by the keeper, who ran beside them, the fugitives proceeded for a couple of miles at a rapid pace over the downs, when, it not appearing that they were followed, John Lutcombe

halted for a moment to recover breath. The fresh air had in some degree revived Amabel, and the circumstance of their providential deliverance raised the spirits of the whole party. Soon after this, they reached the ridge of the downs, the magnificent view from which was completely hidden by the shades of night, and tracking the old Roman Road for about a mile, descended the steep hill in the direction of the Blowing Stone. Skirting a thick grove of trees, they presently came to a gate, which the keeper opened, and led them through an orchard towards what appeared to be in the gloom a moderately-sized and comfortable habitation.

"The owner of this house, Mrs. Compton," observed John Lutcombe to Amabel, "is a widow, and the kindest lady in Berkshire. A message has been sent by your aunt to beg her to afford you an asylum for a few days; and I will answer for it you will be hospitably received."

As he spoke, the loud barking of a dog was heard, and an old grey-headed butler was seen advancing towards them with a lantern in his hand. At the same time, a groom issued from the stable on the right, accompanied by the

dog in question, and hastening towards them, assisted them to dismount. The dog seemed to recognize the keeper, and leapt upon him, licked his hand, and exhibited other symptoms of delight.

"What, Ringwood," cried the keeper, patting his head "dost thou know thy old master again? I see you have taken good care of him, Sam," he added to the groom. "I knew I was placing him into good hands when I gave him to Mrs. Compton."

"Ay, ay, he can't find a better home, I fancy," said the groom.

"Will it please you to walk this way, ladies," interposed the butler. "My mistress has been expecting you for some time, and had become quite uneasy about you." So saying, he led the way through a garden, filled with the odours of a hundred unseen flowers, and ushered them into the house.

Mrs. Compton, an elderly lady, of very pleasing exterior, received them with great kindness, and conducted them to a comfortable apartment, surrounded with book-shelves and old family portraits, where refreshments were spread out for them. The good old lady seemed par-

ticularly interested in Amabel, and pressed her, but in vain, to partake of the refreshments. With extreme delicacy, she refrained from inquiring into the cause of their visit, and seeing that they appeared much fatigued, rang for a female attendant, and conducted them to a sleeping-chamber, where she took leave of them for the night. Amabel was delighted with her kind hostess, and, contrary to her expectations, and to those of Nizza Macascree, enjoyed undisturbed repose. She awoke in the morning greatly refreshed, and after attiring herself, gazed through her chamber window. It looked upon a trim and beautiful garden, with a green and mossy plot carved out into quaintly-fashioned beds, filled with the choicest flowers, and surrounded by fine timber, amid which a tall fir-tree appeared proudly conspicuous. Mrs. Compton, who, it appeared, always arose with the sun, was busied in tending her flowers, and as Amabel watched her interesting pursuits, she could scarcely help envying her.

"What a delightful life your mistress must lead," she observed to a female attendant, who was present. "I cannot imagine greater happiness than hers."

"My mistress ought to be happy," said the attendant; "for there is no one living who does more good. Not a cottage nor a farm-house in the neighbourhood but she visits to inquire whether she can be of any service to its inmate, and wherever her services *are* required, they are always rendered. Mrs. Compton's name will never be forgotten in Kingston Lisle."

At this moment, Amabel caught sight of the benevolent countenance of the good old lady looking up at the window, and a kindly greeting passed between them. Ringwood, who was a privileged intruder, was careering round the garden, and though his mistress watched his gambols around her favourite flower-beds with some anxiety, she did not check him. Amabel and Nizza now went downstairs, and Mrs. Compton returning from the garden, all the household, including Leonard and Blaize, assembled in the breakfast-room for morning prayers.

Breakfast over, Mrs. Compton entered into conversation with Amabel, and ascertained all the particulars of her history. She was greatly interested in it, but did not affect to conceal the anxiety it gave her.

"Yours is really a very dangerous position," she said, "and I should be acting unfairly towards you, if I told you otherwise. However, I will give you all the protection in my power, and I trust your retreat may not be discovered."

Mrs. Compton's remark did not tend to dispel Amabel's uneasiness, and both she and Nizza Macascree passed a day of great disquietude.

In the mean time, Leonard and Blaize were treated with great hospitality by the old butler in the servants' hall; and though the former was not without apprehension that their retreat might be discovered, he trusted, if it were so, to some fortunate chance to effect their escape. He did not dare to confide his apprehensions to the butler, nor did the other make any inquiries, but it being understood that their visit was to be secret, every precaution was taken to keep it so. John Lutcombe had tarried no longer than enabled him to discuss a jug of ale, and then set out for Ashdown, promising to return on the following day; but he had not yet made his appearance. Evening arrived, and nothing alarming having occurred, all became comparatively easy; and Mrs. Compton herself,

who had looked unusually grave throughout the day, now recovered her wonted cheerfulness.

Their satisfaction, however, was not long afterwards disturbed by the arrival of a large train of horsemen at the gate, and a stately personage alighted, and walked at the head of a gallant train, towards the house. At the sight of the new-comers, whom they instantly knew were the King and his suite, Amabel and Nizza Macascree flew up stairs, and shutting themselves in their chamber, awaited the result in the utmost trepidation. They were not kept long in suspense. Shortly after the King's arrival, Mrs. Compton herself knocked at the door, and, in a tone of deep commiseration, informed Amabel that his Majesty desired to see her. Knowing that refusal was impossible, Amabel complied, and descended to a room looking upon the garden, in which she found the King. He was attended only by Chiffinch, and received her with a somewhat severe aspect, and demanded why she had left Ashdown, contrary to his express injunctions?

Amabel stated her motives.

"What you tell me is by no means satisfactory," rejoined the king; "but since you

have chosen to trust to yourself, you can no longer look for protection from me."

"I beseech your Majesty to consider the strait into which I was driven," returned Amabel, imploringly.

"Summon the Earl of Rochester to the presence," said the King, turning from her to Chiffinch.

"In pity, sire," cried Amabel, throwing herself at his feet.

"Let the injunction be obeyed," rejoined Charles, peremptorily.

And the chief page departed.

Amabel instantly arose, and drew herself proudly up. Soon afterwards Rochester made his appearance, and on seeing Amabel, a flush of triumphant joy overspread his features.

"I withdraw my interdiction, my lord," said the King to him. "You are at liberty to renew your suit to this girl."

"Hear me, Lord Rochester," said Amabel, addressing the Earl; "I have conquered the passion I once felt for you, and regard you only as one who has sought my ruin, and from whom I have fortunately escaped. When you

learn from my own lips that my heart is dead to you, that I never can love you more, and that I only desire to be freed from your addresses, I cannot doubt but you will discontinue them."

"Your declaration only inflames me the more, lovely Amabel," replied the Earl, passionately. "You must, and shall be mine."

"Then my death will rest at your door," she rejoined.

"I will take my chance of that," rejoined the Earl, carelessly.

Amabel then quitted the King's presence, and returned to her own chamber, where she found Nizza Macascree, in a state of indescribable agitation.

"All has happened that I anticipated," she said to Nizza Macascree. "The King will no longer protect me, and I am exposed to the persecutions of the Earl of Rochester, who is here."

As she spoke, an usher entered, and informed Nizza Macascree that the King commanded her presence. The piper's daughter looked at Amabel with a glance of unutterable anguish.

"I fear you must go," said Amabel, "but Heaven will protect you!"

They then tenderly embraced each other, and Nizza Macascree departed with the usher.

Some time having elapsed, and Nizza not returning, Amabel became seriously uneasy. Hearing a noise below, she looked forth from the window, and perceived the King and all his train departing. A terrible foreboding shot through her heart. She gazed anxiously after them, but could not perceive Nizza Macascree. Overcome at last by her anxiety, she rushed down stairs, and had just reached the last step when she was seized by two persons. A shawl was passed over her head, and she was forced out of the house.

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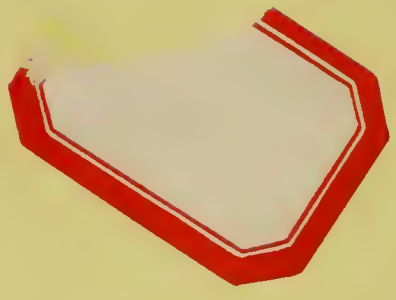

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